

CARTE ITALIANE

A Journal of Italian Studies

Volume 12

1991-92

Department of Italian, UCLA

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Foreword

The new Editorial Board of *Carte Italiane* is glad to present volume 12 of its literary journal. This year's special edition includes the Proceedings of the First UCLA Interdisciplinary Conference on Italian Culture held on April 26–27, 1990.

Since our journal is undergoing a phase of reorganization and being revitalized due to last year's stagnant activity, we apologize if some of the papers presented at the conference have not been published. We have made a lenient but fair selection; in some cases it was impossible to contact some of the participants due to the great length of time which had elapsed between the actual conference and this year's publication.

We would like to thank our colleagues on the Editorial Board, the professors of the Advisory Board, Calvin Graves and Lynn Boyden for their support during the early stages of preparation. We are greatly indebted to our new Chair of the Department, Professor Luigi Ballerini, who has provided an unprecedented employment position for a Director of *Carte Italiane* for the years to come. We are grateful to the past editor of the journal, Andrea Baldi, who has always been supportive and helpful at a time when his own schedule was so thoroughly besieged. Without his assistance this year's volume would not have gone to press.

The Editors

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST
UCLA INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDENT CONFERENCE
ON ITALIAN CULTURE

Los Angeles, April 26–27, 1990

Edited by the Editorial Board of *Carte Italiane*, 1991–92

Directors of the Conference:

Andrea Baldi and Tommaso Raso

Organizing Committee:

Cristina Della Coletta and Barbara Zecchi-Monléon (Vice-Directors),
Michael D'Andrea and Rosanna Ferraro

The First Interdisciplinary Student Conference on Italian Culture has been organized by *Carte Italiane*, the Graduate Student Journal of the Italian Department at UCLA.

When we decided to plan this conference, we intended to create a program which would address a need that we, as well as other students on campus, felt strongly about: namely to have a multifarious and dynamic forum, in which intense interaction would allow students, particularly graduate students, to exchange their ideas and intellectual accomplishments. Our goal was to make *Carte Italiane* something more than a vehicle apt for the circulation of selected papers among a narrow circle of readers. We felt it was now necessary to embrace a wider and more diverse audience.

We wanted to transcend, at least for a couple of days, what we feel can at times be a structural limitation of the University system: the isolation of departments in their own specific areas of interest. It is for this reason that we conceived an interdisciplinary conference, so that we

could offer the widest possible array of methodologies and perspectives within the field of Italian studies and culture.

We also wanted to gather students from various universities, not only from the U.S. but also from Canada, so that we could encourage a more interesting exchange. Therefore, beyond the diverse thematic approaches to Italian culture, brought about by the very nature of the initiative, there would also be a major impact at various levels among students, since different universities would offer distinct cultural and academic environments.

Determined to reach our goals, we tried, with the combined efforts and hard work of Cristina Della Coletta, Barbara Zecchi (Vice-Directors), Michael D'Andrea, and Rosanna Ferraro, to take advantage of the services that UCLA and the Campus Programs Committee offer to organizations like *Carte Italiane*. Notwithstanding the help of the people who assisted this project, we had to fight against deadlines and to cut some red tape in order to achieve our purpose. But we are now particularly pleased for having made the event possible, and for giving the opportunity to a wide range of graduate students who came from various schools and with different backgrounds (from Italian Literature to Cinema, from Political Science to Art History, from History to Comparative Literature) to present their work at our conference.

Thus we accomplished at least our primary purpose: in fact we feel that in the realm of graduate studies there are many serious and promising students who would deserve a better chance to introduce themselves and their research, and most importantly, to acquire vital academic experience. The publication of the Proceedings of the Conference will attest the encouraging success of such an attempt. In spite of some organizational inconveniences we had to overcome—due to time limitations and our lack of experience—, we believe in the inner value of this idea, and the large audience who attended the conference represents by itself a great reward. We hope that our initiative will meet your expectations and that other departments and universities will soon organize student conferences with the same spirit of open communication.

We would now like to thank, on behalf of all the organizers, the Campus Program Committee which financed the conference, the direc-

tor of the Italian Cultural Institute of Los Angeles who kindly offered a reception, and the chairmen and directors of the departments who joined the initiative.

A special thank goes to Prof. Geoffrey Symcox from the History Department, UCLA, for agreeing to commence the presentations with a speech on “The City as Theater: Public Ceremonies in Baroque Turin (1650 to 1750)”. Finally we are grateful to Prof. Edward Tuttle, chairman of the Italian Department at UCLA, for his consistent availability and support.

*Andrea Baldi and Tommaso Raso,
Directors of the Conference*

Caricatura e carattere

Una lettura del *Candelaio*

There are hardly any two things more essentially different than *character* and *caricature*.
W. Hogarth

Il Candelaio del Bruno si presenta senz'altro, sin dalla denuncia della «vanità delle magiche superstizioni» nell'argomento della commedia¹, come un'allegoria della superiorità dell'*ars nova* rinascimentale sull'*ars antiqua* della tradizione medioevale.

In questa prospettiva, la vicenda del Candelaio appare allora tutta compresa fra l'iniziale soliloquio di Bonifacio, ad esaltazione dell'arte magica, intesa, anacronisticamente, come potenza opposta alla natura, e come suo supplemento:

L'arte supplisce al difetto della natura... Si dice che l'arte magica è di tanta importanza che contro natura fa ritornar gli fiumi a dietro, fissar il mare, ruggire i monti, intonar l'abisso, proibire il sole, despiccar la luna, sveller le stelle, toglier il giorno e far fermar la notte²;

e la finale rivendicazione della dignità della *magia naturalis*, implicitamente contenuta nelle parole di Gioan Bernardo:

Le cose son talmente ordinate, che la natura non manca nel necessario, e non abonda in soverchio. Le ostreche non han piedi; perché, in qual si voglia parte del mar che si trovino, han tutto quello che basta a lor sustentamento, perché d'acqua sola, e del caldo del sole, — la cui virtude penetra in sino al profondo del mare, — si mantengono. Le talpe

ancora non han occhi; perché la lor vita consiste sotto terra, e non vivono d'altro che di terra, e non posson perderla. A chi non ave arte, non si danno ordegni³

Non a caso, questa eloquente apologia è affidata al pittore Gioan Bernardo, trasparente incarnazione, qui, dell'Autore medesimo (basti guardare al nome); ma soprattutto, rappresentante di un'arte che doveva apparire al Bruno come l'esempio più abbagliante della possibilità di quella rifondazione integrale del sapere cui egli stesso mirava. Anche la specificità della beffa centrale del *Candelaio*, e la sua originalità rispetto alla più recente tradizione comica, è data dalla definizione del suo ideatore — Gioan Bernardo « pittore »⁴, e non più semplice « dipintore », come Calandrino (beffato dai due altri « dipintori » Bruno e Buffalmacco), nel cui nome è già implicita un'allusione alla meccanicità della professione.⁵

La filosofia « epicuraica »⁶ di Bernardo, artefice inesauribile di beffe (come suggerisce questo rapido scambio di battute: « CENICO. Oh! Voi sempre burlate / GIO. BERNARDO Sì, sì, burlo »)⁷, viene chiaramente contrapposta a quella del supposto mago Scaramurè — cui il credulo Bonifacio ricorre per ottenere le grazie della signora Vittoria —, capace di evocare, a suo dire, « le superstizioni di arte più profonda » della magia naturale;⁸ e a quella dell'alchimista Cencio, entrambi, in realtà, volgari truffatori e semplici pappagalli, come il pedante Manfurio, di un lessico obsoleto. Queste figure non sono che l'ennesima variazione su personaggi tipici della polemica rinascimentale, contro i quali già Leonardo, ad esempio, si era scagliato (nei suoi frammenti « contro il negromante e l'alchimista »)⁹, e che erano stati frequente oggetto di satira nella commedia dell'epoca, dal *Negromante* dell'Ariosto all'*Astrologo* del Della Porta. Ma se, in questi precedenti, la beffa vale soprattutto a denunciare la vanità della (supposta) arte e la dabbenaggine del credulo beffato, nel caso del *Candelaio* la beffa viene a confermare l'eccellenza dell'arte, poiché si realizza nei modi che le sono propri. Ciò che la beffa di Gioan Bernardo ai danni di Bonifacio produce è difatti la sua *caricatura*.

Bernardo soddisfa così, a suo modo, la commissione di un ritratto fattagli da Bonifacio, nel primo atto della commedia, ma ne beffa l'ignoranza e la vanità: il 'Candelaio' pretende difatti un ritratto, non

solo somigliante, ma anzi tale da abbellirlo («...per vita vostra, fatemi bello»)¹⁰. Il pittore mantiene burlescamente la promessa, e dona al suo modello «quel che gli manca»: così che alla fine del periodo di posa, per così dire, egli è «figurato veramente per Atteone, il quale, andando a caccia, cercava le sue corna, e, allor che pensò gioir de sua Diana, dovenne cervo»¹¹. Gioan Bernardo si dimostra con ciò vero virtuoso dell'arte: la caricatura o *ritratto carico* è difatti un'altra invenzione del Rinascimento, legata, ancora una volta, al nome di Leonardo, ma praticata metodicamente a partire dai Carracci, per divenire, poi, passatempo alla moda nel secolo successivo¹².

Come hanno osservato Gombrich e Kris, è solo a partire dal Rinascimento italiano, in cui viene rimosso «the taboo which had once forbidden the play with a person's likeness», e la credenza nel potere magico delle immagini è per la prima volta posta radicalmente in discussione, che «a free play with the representational image» può essere esperito come «funny»¹³. Questo momento di transizione è registrato con estrema precisione nel *Candelaio*, dove, da un lato, il finto mago Scaramurè pretende di operare il suo incantesimo sulla signora Vittoria per mezzo di una «immagine di cera vergine, fatta in suo nome»¹⁴; dall'altro, l'immoralità perturbante¹⁵ del travestimento, denunciata, significativamente, dal pedante Manfurio: «*Nisi urgente necessitate, nefas esset habitum proprium dimittere*»¹⁶ — poiché (come osserva il Vignarolo ne *Lo Astrologo*) «il diventare un altro é una specie di morire»¹⁷—, si rivela invece risorsa comica irresistibile, ad esempio nel dialogo, quasi fichtiano, fra i due sosia Gioan Bernardo e Bonifacio:

GIO. BERNARDO O io sono io, o costui è io... Olà, Messer de la negra barba, dimmi chi di noi due è io, io o tu? non rispondi?

BONIFACIO Voi siete voi, ed io sono io.

GIO. BERNARDO Come, io sono io? Non hai tu, ladro, rubbata la mia persona, e, sotto questo abito ed apparenza, vai commettendo di ribalderie?¹⁸

Il legame della nuova tecnica della caricatura con la tradizione fisiognomica, rinata soprattutto grazie all'opera del Della Porta, era ben chiaro agli autori dell'epoca; basti qui la testimonianza di Thomas Browne, che nel 1690 scriveva: «When men's faces are drawn with

resemblance to some other animals, the Italians call it to be drawn in Caricatura»¹⁹. E indubbiamente il procedimento sperimentato dal Della Porta, di accostare in una medesima tavola la figura di un uomo a quella di un animale, per consentire al lettore di rilevare con facilità la somiglianza di determinati tratti delle due fisionomie, rappresenta l'antecedente più prossimo della «scoperta» che è alla base dell'invenzione della caricatura, e cioè che «similarity is not essential to likeness»²⁰.

In due tavole del trattato del Della Porta (sicuramente noto al Bruno), l'immagine di Socrate, filosofo amante per eccellenza, viene accostata a quella del cervo, emblema della lussuria, secondo lo pseudo-Aristotele, autore del trattato classico sulla fisiognomica, che Della Porta così parafrasa: «Quelli c'hanno il naso simo [over schiacciato], sono libidinosi, e si riferiscono al Ceruo, perchè i Cerui sono simi, e molto lussuriosi, e perciò al tempo del coito divengono pazzi». A convalida di questa autorità, Della Porta allega anche quelle di Polemone e Adamantio, i quali attestano che «la simità del naso dà segno di puttaniero»²¹.

La «metamfisicosi»²² in cervo di Bonifacio — il Candelaio che «stiman tutti pazzo», e che è vittima del «tremor de l'amore» al solo pensiero di soddisfare le sue voglie con la cortigiana Vittoria²³ — non potrebbe essere più chiaramente prefigurata.

Per ottenere il *ritratto carico* di Bonifacio, Gioan Bernardo ricorre ad un ulteriore artificio, appena entrato a far parte del corredo del pittore rinascimentale: la *camera obscura*.

Le origini di questo eponimo della fotografia sono imprecisabili, anche se una prima descrizione dello strumento si deve con certezza al filosofo arabo Alhazen, grande studioso di ottica — o *perspectiva*, secondo la dizione latina, prevalente a partire dal XIII secolo — e se Leonardo descrive ripetutamente nelle sue note di ottica tale apparato, da lui definito *oculus artificialis*, prendendolo a modello del funzionamento dell'occhio umano. È nella *Magia naturalis* (1558) del Della Porta, tuttavia, che l'utilizzazione dello strumento a fini pittorici viene per la prima volta raccomandata²⁴.

Dopo aver descritto con straordinaria vividezza la preparazione della *camera* e il suo funzionamento:

Per veder quelle cose in oscuro in una camera che sono fuori illuminate dal sole, e con i suoi colori,

è bisogno che prima chiudiate le finestre della camera, e seria ancor meglio se si otturassero tutte le fessure, che non entrasse alcun lume dentro, destruesse tutta l'apparenza; buserai una fenestra, farai il buco della grossezza di un dito per lungo, e per largo, sopra vi accomoderai una tavoletta di piombo, ovvero di rame, e ce la incollerai, della grossezza di un cartone, nel cui mezo farai un buco rotondo della grossezza del dito picciolo della mano, all'incontro vi porrai lenzuola bianche, o panni biancheggianti, overo una carta; così tutte le cose che di fuori sono illuminate dal sole, le vedrai dentro, vedrai [che] coloro che passeggiano per le strade rivolti con la testa in giù come antipodi, e le cose destre appariranno sinistre, e tutte le cose rivoltate²⁵,

il Della Porta ne suggerisce l'utilizzazione anche da parte del dilettante di pittura:

Come alcuno che non sappia dipingere, possa disegnare l'effigie d'un uomo o d'altra cosa,

perché sappia solamente assomigliare i colori. E questo artificio non è da dispregiarsi. Dia il sole nella fenestra, et appresso quel buco porrai l'uomo, o l'imagini di quelle cose che vogliamo dipingere, che il sole illumini l'imagini, ma non il buco; al buco porrai incontro una carta bianca, e tanto andrai accomodando l'uomo al lume, avvicinando e dilungando, mentre vedrai la perfetta immagine di colui che voi retrarre sopra la tavola, allora quello che vorrà pingere, poni i colori sopra la tavola, dove appaiono, del volto, della bocca, de gli occhi, e così di tutte le figure che appare, così partendosi qui l'oggetto, resterà la stampa nella carta, e si vedrà in questa come se la vedesti in un specchio.²⁶

Ma è, in generale, l'utilizzazione illusionistica della nuova invenzione, in questo capitolo della sua opera interamente dedicato alle « mirabili visioni » producibili attraverso semplici giuochi di specchi, a premere maggiormente al Della Porta, i cui interessi teatrali sembrano occupare un posto nient'affatto secondario all'interno della sua multiforme produzione letteraria²⁷. La *camera obscura* è infatti prima di tutto il luogo deputato alla beffa, il luogo dove l'inversione dell'immagine, la fata Morgana (sotto la cui egida Bruno pone, non a caso, la sua opera)²⁸ si materializza a piacere. In particolare, la *magia naturalis* con-

ferma così la sua superiore dignità, proprio nel luogo privilegiato delle operazioni alchemiche. Basti confrontare la descrizione che precede con quella, che della stanza necessaria alle sue magie fa l'astrologo Albumazar, — astrologo « che partecipa un poco del negromante, che pizzica dell'alchimista e del far molini »²⁹, e che è niente più che un prestigiatore — nella commedia del Della Porta medesimo:

Primieramente bisogna trovar una camera terrena che sia rivolta al levante, che è la più benigna parte del cielo; che non abbia finestre al ponente; ...che sia in tutto conversa al settentrione: ché...i cattivi influssi del cielo vengono da settentrione, che è la parte di dietro del cielo... E se pure la finestra settentrionale s'apre in qualche vicolo deserto, non sarebbe tanto cattiva...Or, declinando dalla goezia alla teurgia, farmacia, neciomanzia, negromanzia, arte notoria e altre vane e superstiziose scienze, ci attaccheremo all'arte prestigiatoria che illude e perstringe gli occhi, che fan vedere una cosa per l'altra...E perché la Luna è quel pianeta in cielo che si trasforma di più forme...ci serviremo di quella nella nostra operazione...perché con quel suo mostrarsi in varie forme, mostra agli uomini d'intelletto che ella sola può fare questa maravigliossima metamorfosi...Onde bisogna ornare prima quella camera di drappi bianchi finissimi leggeri, e se fossero di tela d'argento, assai meglio; ...la terra coperta di lini bianchi e sottili...ché con tal bianchezza e purità si allettano li influssi lunari, perché questo apparecchio si fa per la Luna.³⁰

« The earliest *published* account of the camera obscura »³¹ è contenuto in una nota alla prima traduzione italiana del trattato *De Architectura* di Vitruvio, pubblicata nel 1521 da Cesare Cesariano, allievo di Leonardo, che ne fa uso per elucidare il termine *spectaculum*, usato da Vitruvio per designare, secondo l'interpretazione di Cesariano, il foro di forma conica attraverso cui le immagini del mondo esterno trascorrono, per materializzarsi poi, all'interno della camera oscura, su di uno schermo appositamente predisposto. *Spectaculum* è dunque tanto il *medium* quanto l'effetto dell'illusione, così come la penombra è solo il preludio necessario al pieno dispiegarsi della luce: Carubina, moglie di Bonifacio, raccomanda alla ruffiana Lucia (facile etimologia, questa) di allontanare tutte le fonti di luce dalla stanza, dove Bonifacio, travestito da Bernardo, spera di incontrare la signora Vittoria, e di

soppravvenire solo ad un segnale convenuto: « Quando saranno queste più solenne terze strida, correrete voi di casa con i lumi: e cossì, tutti insieme, ne conosceremo alla luce, con la grazia di S[anta] Lucia »³².

Come messer Nicia nella *Mandragola*, anche Bonifacio prende « lucciole per lanterne »³³, e viene meritamente beffato. Dopo essere passato attraverso la *camera obscura* della signora Vittoria, ed essersi rispecchiato nel suo beffatore — della cui bellezza egli si è potuto impossessare solo per un attimo: « oggi mi parete più bello che mai », osserva Lucia prima di introdurlo nella stanza, dove lo sorprenderà invece Carubina)³⁴ —, Bonifacio è ormai pronto a trasformarsi letteralmente nel suo ritratto veridico. Anche alla caricatura, come alla beffa, è infatti d'uopo una vittima; e nessun animale è più pronò al sacrificio del cervo, « placidissimum animalium », secondo la definizione di Plinio³⁵.

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Notes:

1. Giordano Bruno, *Il Candelaio*, in *Commedie del Cinquecento*, a cura di Nino Borsellino, vol. 2, Feltrinelli, Milano 1967, p. 296.

2. Bruno, *Candelaio*, pp. 314–315.

3. Bruno, *Candelaio*, p. 434. Cfr. anche l'enigmatica raccomandazione di Gioan Bernardo a Bonifacio nella scena VIII del I atto: « ...lasciate l'arte antica » (p. 327).

4. Cfr. la sua orgogliosa presentazione di sé, in fine di commedia: « La mia arte è di depengere, e donar a gli occhii de' mundani la imagine di Nostro Signore, di Nostra Madonna e d'altri Santi di paradiso » (Bruno, *Candelaio*, p. 444).

5. « Secondo il Vasari... « calandrino » era una squadra di legno adoperata da pittori e scalpellini » (Boccaccio, *Decameron*, a cura di C. Segre, Mursia, Milano 1966, p. 479).

6. Bruno, *Candelaio*, p. 300.

7. Bruno, *Candelaio*, p. 332.

8. Bruno, *Candelaio*, p. 328.

9. Vedine il testo in Leonardo da Vinci, *Scritti letterari*, a cura di A. Marinoni, Rizzoli, Milano 1974, pp. 161–168.

10. Bruno, *Candelaio*, p. 326.

11. Bruno, *Candelaio*, p. 327, 301.

12. Vedi E. H. Gombrich, «Leonardo's Grotesque Heads», in *The Heritage of Apelles*, Oxford UP, London 1976; E. H. Gombrich-E. Kris, *Caricature*, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1940.

13. E. Kris (with E. H. Gombrich), «The Principles of Caricature», in E. Kris, *Psychoanalytical Explorations in Art*, Schocken, New York 1974, p. 202.

14. Bruno, *Candelaio*, pp. 355-356.

15. Cfr. il saggio hofmanniano di Freud, da cui anche le indagini di Kris ovviamente dipendono.

16. Bruno, *Candelaio*, p. 375.

17. G. B. Della Porta, *Lo Astrologo*, in *Le Commedie*, a cura di V. Spampinato, vol. II, Laterza, Bari 1911, p. 325.

18. Bruno, *Candelaio*, p. 411.

19. Cit. in C. R. Ashbee, *Caricature*, Scribner's Sons, New York 1928, p. 32.

20. Gombrich-Kris, *Caricature*, p. 12.

21. *Fisionomia/dell'Homme, /et la celeste/di Gio: Battista Della Porta. /Libri sei. /In Venezia M.DC.LII*, p. 174.

22. Bruno, *Cabala del cavallo pegaseo*, in *Dialoghi italiani*, vol. II, p. 885.

23. Bruno, *Candelaio*, p. 447, 403

24. Cfr. Helmut Gernsheim, *The Origins of Photography*, Thames and Hudson, New York 1982, pp. 7-11.

25. G. B. Della Porta, *Della Magia Naturale*, libro XVII, cap. VI, in *Scritti di ottica*, a cura di V. Ronchi, Il Polifilo, Milano 1968, p. 170.

26. Della Porta, *Della Magia Naturale*, p. 172.

27. Cfr. a sostegno di questa tesi, Louise G. Clubb, *Giambattista Della Porta Dramatist*, Princeton UP, Princeton 1965; per la posizione contraria, N. Borsellino, «Nota introduttiva» a *La Fantesca*, in *Commedie del Cinquecento*, vol. II, p. 455.

28. Vedi supra..

29. Della Porta, *Lo Astrologo*, p. 307.

30. Della Porta, *Lo Astrologo*, pp. 328-330.

31. Gernsheim, *Origins*, p. 10.

32. Bruno, *Candelaio*, p. 396.

33. Cfr. Machiavelli, *Mandragola*, atto V, scena II: «NICIA: ...al buio lo menai in camera, messilo al letto; ed innanzi che mi partissi, volli toccare con mano come la cosa andava, ch  io non sono uso ad essermi dato ad intendere lucciole per lanterne».

34. Bruno, *Candelaio*, p. 404.

35. «Placidissimu(m) animalium», secondo Plinio (*Nat.hist.*, VIII, 50).

That Awful Mess, Life: The Language of Gadda's *Quer pasticciaccio* . . .

Like those prototypical modernists, Gertrude Stein and James Joyce, Carlo Emilio Gadda poses a stylistic challenge never fully met by writers who follow. But I believe we must look beyond the formal sphere to comprehend Gadda's insistent experimentation; his linguistic manipulations reveal a psychological and socio-political contradiction. My notion, simply put, is that the rage driving Gadda's texts is not so much, as critics have suggested, a failed idealism but rather a kind of fatalism or determinism based on the very paradigm he was rejecting.

In their manifestoes, the Italian Futurists welcomed war as a kind of "hygiene" that would rid the world of everything they considered outmoded and unhealthy—which included women and the feminine in general. Futurism gave the world cultural representations of a new order, portrayed as a progressive and scientific project, that fascism would attempt to bring to life.

The self-presentation of the Fascist regime's goals came to dominate the political life of Italy for nearly two decades. Their social program privileged the Family as the unit for reproducing as many children as possible (*male* children, of course, since the program was integrally tied to an imperialist militarism.) In *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*, Gadda pours contempt on this notion; yet the contemporary reader may detect, in this loose and truncated chronicle of detection, the very concepts it attacks.

While claiming to despise the Fascist reproduction program, which

relegates women to a biologically determined role, Gadda seems possessed, at least metaphorically, by this application of biological determinism. As critics rightly point out, the text depicts people through a web of biological processes. But the most highly charged and visceral reality in the text is that of "*Fenditure*". Female characters are focused upon most specifically in relation to their *reproductive* & *sexual* organs and functions.

Pasticciaccio's female characters are, to put it simply, *fascinating*. Wealthy, refined, melancholy Liliana Balducci—the narrative's central victim—fascinates inspector Ingravallo, the novel's "protagonist." As objects of fascination, women in this novel are portrayed in excruciating detail—visual, olfactory, sociological, psychological, sartorial—from a clinical description of the fine lace undergarments and delicate exposed skin of Liliana's corpse, to a long gaze (multiple and masculine) at an unkempt but beautiful street urchin during her interrogation, to an obsessive evocation of a gob of saliva hanging from the mouth of the hag-like Zamira.

Females seem to represent in this book a procreative imperative, an obscene proliferative capacity associated with the vegetal order. Fecund and regurgitative (like Zamira's spittle), they fascinate because they repulse, reflecting the ad hoc, contingent nature of reality. Gadda claimed that his "baroque" literary style merely reflected life's arbitrary winding futility. His writing proceeds by a series of digressions that may be seen as attempts to track down "life" as an orderly process. The underlying feeling is despair at ever finding equilibrium within the frightful anarchy of nature. His cornucopia of imagery constitutes a neurotic fixation upon the female, attempting to fix her in an assigned iconographic role which—I am suggesting—parallels her assigned social role within fascism.

In *I viaggi la morte* Gadda writes: "La lingua, specchio di totale essere, e del totale pensiero, viene da una cospirazione di forze, intellettuali o spontanee, razionali o istintive..." We may thus see in his language a reflection of his thought, with all the archeologies and contradictions to which the mind is prone. In the same book he speaks of language as a "lavoro collettivo" Gadda's texts displays that "carnivalizing" impulse towards the interpenetration of registers which Bakhtin saw as integral to the novel's vitality. Gadda's employment

of the speech modes of various strata of Italian society does indeed partly give voice to these. The text slides ceaselessly among different linguistic registers, with only one interlude of poise. This comes during the interrogation of a beautiful girl named Ines. While Ines, dressed in dirty rags, is under scrutiny by the policemen, the tone alters into something like compassion for "a poor girl over whom life has poured so much misery."

An astonishing range of imagery and registers comes into play. The economy of Gadda's prose is one of over-production, a potlatch. But it's not a *jouissance* implying the sense of unfettered play and generosity; the excess here seems to issue from desperation. Manufactured as a linguistic simulacrum of the world in its overwhelming variety and indecipherability, the text may represent a mimetic protective fetish.

Admitting into its orbit speech genres from different levels of society, Gadda's linguistic performance is also a vehicle for his "political unconscious", the ideology that prevailed in Italy during his formative years. The work is compulsively, obsessively, even *explicitly* about language. With this in mind, let us examine some of the language of *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de Via Merulana*.

The first crime in this "detective story" is the theft of a great deal of expensive jewelry from the Countess Menegazzi. Her name underscores what I would point to as a key to Gadda's attitude toward the female. She is, literally, "minus testicles" [mene—meno—minus / gazzi—cazzi]. In American vernacular she has "no balls."¹ Instead, she has a box full of valuable jewelry. These jewels form the "prey" (or fetish) for the long, circuitous hunt that is the narrative thread of this book. At the same time, both the specific jewels and wealth in general are strongly identified with excrement.

In the early pages of the novel the jewels are robbed from "quel sacrario di memorie" the bedroom of the "blonde countess". In the final pages they are discovered hidden in a chamber pot in the filthy hovel of a young woman referred to several times as "la patata". Moving from rich widow to poor peasant girl, from Venetian refinement to Lazian vegetal squalor, from third floor urban apartment to rural shack, the story makes a long trajectory from high to low, fixated upon the ersatz or sublimated female genitalia, the jewels.

Folk wisdom characterizes a wife as a treasure chest, connotationally combining the sexual and economic aspects of the institution of marriage and the role of Wife. Jewels or a jewel box thus signify both wealth and private parts. In the case of both the countess's stolen jewelry and the jewelry Liliana bestows upon her young cousin before her death, it is a pretty boy who springs them loose from their female possessor. The murderer may or may not be one of these boys.

Mythical associations are consistently evoked in relation to the contested metals and stones. Other descriptions of the treasure—such as the police-dossier inventory of the stolen goods—employ scientific and bureaucratic terms, undercutting and ironizing mythical proportions accrued in the other register. The most notable mythic scene is an extended dream sequence unexpectedly remembered by Sergeant Pestalozzi as he rides a scooter down from a high hilly area. A topaze goes through a series of transformations: pazzo—topazzio—giallazo—topo—topaccio—girasole—sole—disco maligno—ruota—fanale... and so on, culminating up in a bacchanalian dance with a Circe-like “enchantress”. It ends its animated fugue by climbing up the legs and into the groin of a dancing contessa, towards (what else?) an all-encompassing “cleft”.

In this hallucinogenic extravaganza, Pestalozzi, who is Inspector Ingravallo's assistant, becomes an extension of the narrator's persona. In fact, most of the men in this text seem to be “doubles” for the narrator and by extension, Gadda. Sergeant Santarella, who lives with nine women in his household, is described as awash in a sea of females. This seems to be the author's position too, awash in a sea of excess, surrounded by the swirl of a fecundity regarded as essentially “feminine”, rich, fascinating and threatening.

Two crimes (a jewel theft and a murder) form the backbone of this story. Their site, an apartment building on via Merulana, is known in the neighborhood as the “palace of gold” because it is home to several rich families whose wealth comes from business speculation during the First World War (the story is set in 1926.) These *nouveau riche* are called “sharks” in the local argot, implying a certain ferocity in the methods by which their wealth was obtained. With Gadda, there is little possibility of an interpretation in terms of “class consciousness”.

Although he is acutely aware of class differences, this attention is at the service of a vision not of social conflict in a struggle for justice but of chaotic and meaningless difference ordained by who knows what fate or destiny.

"Fate" crops up with great frequency in Gadda's dense and animated text. He invokes the "field of the forces of destiny" and calls Italy a "fatal peninsula", alluding to "l'inerto buratino del probabile". "Era scritto che il diciannove de via Merulana, il palazzo del oro, o dei pescicani che fosse, era scritto che doveva fiorire anche lui un bel fiore..." When Ingravallo goes out to San Marino, Gadda's lyrical evocation of the beautiful Roman morning is considerably undercut by: "Era una giornata meravigliosa...di quelle così splendidamente romane che perfino uno statale di ottavo grado...pure quello se sente...un quarche cosa che risomija a la felicità." As if the bureaucratic level of the policeman's career were a state of being, a fate, that precluded certain emotions.

This sense of predestination is particularly associated with the female characters or women in general. For example, the passage describing the state of mind of the widow Menegazzi before the intruder arrives and robs her jewels: "come tutte le donne sole in casa" [viveva in] "anticipazione del evento...il quale, dai e dai, no pote' a meno, alfine, di arrivare davvero anche lui." When Ingravallo arrives at the scene of Liliana's murder, before he enters the building, a circle of neighborhood women are discussing the unluckiness of certain numbers. And, as Ingravallo interrogates people at the scene of the crime, Menegazzi intones repeatedly "er dixiesete e el peyor numero" (This notion of unlucky numbers also figures strongly in the plot of *La cognizione del dolore*.)

Finally, I'd like to take note of a certain contrast between two types of characters and descriptive registers in this book. As if the social/ mental landscape were divided thus:

Indoors = bourgeois, bureaucratic, mercantile, sterile. That is, Liliana, the cops, even Zamira, who is a predatory businesswoman. *Outdoors* = an outsider point of view, criminal, deviant, the countryside (now suburbs) of Rome and its "primitive" inhabitants, implicit or explicit classical landscapes, all that is left of archaic and barbarian Italy (reminiscent of some of Pasolini's associations with these concepts.) In

a sense this book is an apotheosis of class (or gender) conflict, except that the differences are seen as essential and eternal.

The primitive, squalid, poor from the sub-urbs steal from and murder the urban rich. If, for example, we viewed this plot through a classical iconography—in which representation of gender difference was often coded by color: pale skin for women and bronzed skin for men, it might be read as the masculine (outdoor) turning against the feminine (indoor). But I believe that the poor, as representatives of anarchy, proliferation and uncontrollability, are identified with the feminine by Gadda in this work. The latter elements take revenge on the former. Hence the latent but profound anxiety expressed by this text.

The representation of women in this novel seems to be inextricably tied to prevailing, deeply coded notions of Woman as Other, as a part of a “Nature” that threatens to undermine and devour Man, who is, at every point, synonymous with civilization. Mussolini was a man of action who employed the rhetoric of Progress . . . at the service of a reactionary return to the “values” of the Roman empire. The futility implied and fostered by fascism is perhaps the futility of struggle by those who are “weaker”. In the case of the traditionally “weaker” sex, the struggle is far more complex, for it is representation and roles *within* the system of dominant culture which demand the kind of deconstruction an instance of which I have here tried to demonstrate.

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Note:

1. There is some basis for concluding that Menagazzi's name implies that she, being a widow, is deprived of a phallus (or, more precisely, of her husband's *penis*.) However, my point here is not to uncover Gadda's possible, intended or *likely* meanings. What I am interested in is a broader, perhaps less clear-cut but more enduring set of associations underlying his choices. The discursive conflation of “penis” with “testicles” has an illustrious precedent in Freud's discussions of what he comes to call the “castration complex”. At any rate, it is the conflation of “penis” with *phallus*—occurring at opportune moments and vehemently denied at other junctures—which is far more problematic for critical theory.

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“And What is There to See in an Old Picture?”

The concept of the museum in Early futurist manifestos

I cannot accept that our sorrows, our fragile courage . . . should be taken for daily walks through the museum. (Founding Manifesto, 1909)

When Futurism emerged on the cultural arena in 1909 its main goal was to dismiss the meaning of all earlier achievements, to repudiate any link to past or existent traditions so that it could start anew, with a clean slate, to “emerge naked from the river of time”¹. The *tabula rasa*, proclaimed so ostentatiously by the futurists as their only “foundation”, was not only a rhetorical device, but also a meaningful operational mechanism in their strategy. In a country where tradition was a fundamental factor in defining the aesthetic standard a fresh beginning was, the Futurists have argued, the only mode of surpassing the perpetual value system. Yet, rejecting the past was neither a new element in the cultural discourse, nor an entirely novel strategy. Futurism was able however, from the very beginning, to understand the wide ranging implications this open repudiation of cultural values would have, and, with forcefulness and ingenuity, to use the fullest impact of this denial to suggest the superiority of its innovative elements.

“We will fight with all our might the fanatical, senseless and snobbish religion of the past.”² With inflammatory and incisive statements the futurists openly acknowledged throughout their existence the necessity to renounce the perception of the past and tradition as essential elements in the cultural discourse, and overtly discarded the validity

of their cohesive and coherent attributes. As early as 1909, the Founding Manifesto powerfully, and undeniably, projected the futurist stance towards past and tradition. In a bombastic style, and with open, audacious, and rebellious statements, supported by carefully orchestrated hidden metaphors and graphic allegories, the text authoritatively argued for a total breakaway from the pre-existent, imposed, cultural boundaries, arbitrarily determined by “the eternal, futile worship of the past”³. This “cry of rebellion”⁴, was not directed to a single field, but to Italian culture as a whole. The innovative factor of this abrupt rupture and discontinuity, is to be found not only in Futurism’s idiosyncratic rhetoric, but also in the particularities of the national context in which this movement was born.

The museum emerges as early as the Founding Manifesto as the most powerful and encompassing metaphor of the past. The metaphor is decoded in a later text where the futurists stated more overtly that the “religion of the past [has been] encouraged by the vicious presence of the museums”⁵. In the context of the First manifesto analogies,—a favorite attribute of futurist visual and textual vocabulary—are used to clarify the meaning of the metaphor. “Museums: cemeteries!” Equating in this condensed statement a venerated cultural institution with death, the futurists openly rejected the validity and the vitality of existing taste and acknowledged their aim to formulate an artistic program which would challenge the past and look for innovative alternatives.⁶ It is significant to point out here that while the Founding manifesto was essentially intended to establish a literary movement, it is in the visual arts that Marinetti found the most evocative examples.⁷ The futurists argued that the museums, “these reinforced-concrete buildings”⁸, project a staged, redundant and arbitrary inner narrative.

Museums . . . Identical, surely, in the promiscuity of so many bodies unknown to one another. Museums: public dormitories where one lies forever besides hated or unknown beings. Museums: absurd abattoirs of painters and sculptors ferociously slaughtering one another with colours and lines along fought-over walls!⁹

Separated from the “miracles of contemporary life” behind a constructed, artificial facade, the museum, the futurists argued, is a focal

source of perpetuating existent values and suppressing any innovative element. "And what is there to see in an old painting . . . ? Admiring an old painting is like pouring our sensibility into a funerary urn instead of projecting it into the distance."¹⁰ The constant juxtaposition of the museum and death is intended to suggest even more dramatically the dichotomy between this institution and "the surrounding environment . . . the frantic life of our great cities"¹¹. While the museum appears to have a coherent, progressive, and logical inner structure, this dichotomy is the source of the museum's unchangeable aesthetic values. "[H]iding behind a facade of false modernity . . . they [the museums] are actually ensnared by tradition, academism and, above all, a nauseating cerebral laziness."¹² The stagnation inherent in the museum's discourse is also the originator of its isolation. However, the futurists argue that the museum's authoritative position allows its immobile inner structure to become a unique aesthetic standard which is imposed and disseminated to a large audience. "[T]he public always sees as it has been taught to see, through eyes wrapped by routine."¹³ The futurists were eager to suggest to the audience to look "upon nature and not upon the museum as the one and only standard".¹⁴ It is not only in this text that the futurists address the audience directly by suggesting that the museum has the power to impose its aesthetic standard. In the 1912 "Manifesto of Futurist Literature", Marinetti's argument for the dismantling of the "I" is based on the suggestion that "the inner self [of the individual] was destroyed by the library and the museum."

The notion of death is the pivotal element in constructing the metaphor of the museum as it is the key of the concept of the "masterpiece" and "immortal" artists. A contemporary writer, Mario Morasso has also pointed out in his critical analysis of the 1904 Venice Biennale, that the category of "Dead artists" was an important part of the classification within the exhibition structure of the Venetian exhibition¹⁵. Indeed the futurists wanted to underline that this "fanatical worship of all that is old and worm-eaten"¹⁶, projected by the inner structure and the narrative of the museum is enhancing a perception of an absolute aesthetic value, based exclusively on previous cultural discourse. The artists and the artworks, apparently so coherently represented by the linear progression outlined by the narrative of the exhibition space,

are in fact heightening the artificiality of the aesthetic discourse of the museum. The double "death" of the artist—first in a literal sense, and secondly in a symbolic one as part of a constructed realm—, is ironically at the same time, the originator of artistic "immortality". Within the inner structure of the museum the "immortality" of the artist becomes the most valuable attribute in staging the qualities of the "eternal" masterpiece. The relationship between death, past, immortality and the "aura" of originality and superiority that are given within the cultural discourse is heightened by Papini in a direct and sarcastic way.

It is certain that many people in front of whom we bend . . . with respect, our hat in our hand, . . . would be valued very differently had they been among us today . . . The genius who lives likes us . . . does seem to resemble a "genius" [as his image] is too contradictory to the rhetoric. Death is necessary so that the distance can create the halo and the legend that is needed.¹⁷

Moreover, the "passion for eternal things, a desire for immortal, imperishable masterworks"¹⁸ which, by recycling the same aesthetic values, allows the stagnation of the inner discourse of the museum, (and of culture) and becomes the major impediment to any cultural rejuvenation. The almost religious reverence for the past, present in Italian cultural discourse, is very articulately presented in a contemporary critique of the Founding Manifesto, published in France, in which the author acknowledges that "In Italy you cannot make a step without bumping into a dead [body] . . . a famous dead. They live in a perpetual church where everything is sacred . . ." ¹⁹

The concept of "death" has not only a unifying quality but also bears some similarities to Barthes' disjunction between the artist/author and the artwork. In Futurism, the entire structure of the museum is expanded symbolically to represent the authoritative symbiosis of the immortality of both the artist and the masterpiece. In this process both the "author" and the "eternal masterpiece" are displaced from their originating source, and yet in this new, staged structure they construct the most persuasive forum of supreme, definite value. Unquestionable, static, and above all unique and unattainable, eternal values become the common denominator of the inner narrative of the museum. This apparent cohesiveness of the museum, based however solely on past,

recognized, artistic vocabulary, heightens its aesthetic vision of "art-as-ideal, art-as-sublime-holy-inaccessible . . . art-as-torment-purity-vow-solitude-disdain for reality"²⁰.

It is interesting to compare the futurist deconstruction of the museum, with recent analysis, by Derrida, Foucault, Preziosi and Weber, among others, of the development and structure of various cultural institutions, and their mode of operating within society.²¹ There are significant similarities between the authoritative aesthetic standard of the museum and the notion of the "artist/author" described by Foucault in "What is an Author?". Moreover the futurists recognize, in an almost Derridean fashion, the "abyss [that exists] between these docile slaves of past tradition and [them] free moderns, who are confident in the radiant splendour of [their] time".²² Preziosi's analysis of the development of the Fogg museum in the late 19th century, underlines how the concern for creating a coherent system based on classifications triggers the structure its archive to be constructed as "historical and genealogical narratives, fixing historical, geographic, and media boundaries. . . . [T]he evolving system was grounded in a notion of periodicization metaphorized after Vasarian framework of the-man-and/as-his-work."²³ Similarly, Morasso as early as 1904, has perceived this desire to define clear categories and divisions being detrimental to the structure of the Venice Biennale, and later the futurists would perceive it as an inherent problem in museums. Moreover, the futurists would argue that this interest in creating divisions, for defining and reinforcing limits and borderlines, would generate a type of "labelling" among contemporary artists that would have only a negative impact in the development of the artist.

And about our esteemed "specialists"? Throw them all out. Finish them off! The Portraitists, the Genre Painters, the Lake Painters, the Mountain Painters. We have put enough with these impotent painters . . . phoney ceramists, sold-out poster painters, idiotic illustrators²⁴

While in the Founding Manifesto the futurists do not elaborate on the extend of the "damages of daily round[s] of the museum, libraries and academies (cemeteries of vain effort)"²⁵, in later texts they openly acknowledge that the "spineless worshipping of old canvases, old statues and old bric-a-brac, . . . of everything which is worm-ridden

and corroded by time''²⁶ is an impediment for the promotion and acceptance of new art and younger artists. In the manifesto of Futurist painters the tone is vociferous and the metaphors and allegories are replaced by a direct attack using laconic, yet striking sentences.

Ask these priests of a veritable religious cult, these guardians of old aesthetic laws, where can we go and see the works of Giovanni Segantini today. Ask them why the officials of the Commission have never heard of the existence of Gaetano Previati. Ask them where they can see Medardo Rosso's sculptures, or who takes the slightest interest in artists who have not yet had twenty years of struggle and suffering behind them, but are still producing works destined to honour their fatherland?²⁷

The museum should be perceived in futurist texts in an allegorical sense, as it symbolizes other institutions with a "passeist" character: academies, libraries, "museums and cemeteries of mummified syllogism."²⁸ The inner immobility and stagnation, the basis and coherence of the museum's inner structure, is allegorically expanded by the futurists to gigantic proportions, encompassing cities and the entire country. Venice was particularly targeted by the futurists in their manifestos. With offensive statements and striking analogies, these texts intended to highlight not only the encompassing values of the notions of past and tradition, the stage-like artificial structure of the city, but also the diametrically opposed, innovative character of Futurism.

The manifestoes addressed to Venice, a declamatory call for rejecting the fixed myth constructed by the city, are among the best examples of Futurism's capacity of working as an effective and efficient advertising campaign. Disseminated in traditional forms, such as journals and books, read in conferences and mailed to most European newspapers, the text of "Against Passeist Venice" was made available to the public in the most innovative mode to date. On 27 April 1910, 800.000 copies of the text,—an astonishing number even by a xerox and computer age standard,—were scattered from the top of the Tower in Piazza San Marco.

We repudiate ancient Venice, . . . exhausted and ravaged . . . market of antiquarian fakers . . . great sewer of tradition. We want to heal this rotting city, magnificent sore of the past.²⁹

It is difficult to evaluate what was more shocking to the Venetians: the text, or the novel means by which it was disseminated. Only two months later, however, Boccioni had an exhibition in Venice, at Ca' Pesaro, and Marinetti did not miss the occasion to further promote the futurist ideas in that city. At the Fenice theater in Venice the futurists presented, in the format of the *serate*, the text of "Futurist Speech to the Venetians". With similar aggressivity the text projected the futurist vision of the city's facade immersed in the past.

Venetians! Venetians! Why would you want still and forever be faithful slaves of Past, the nurses of the saddest hospital in the world, where dying souls, poisoned by the virus of sentimentalism are languishing.³⁰

Here again, the visual arts are the key in deconstructing the museum-like staging of the city. Venice is a city of "old paintings", "fake antiquarians", "imitators and plagiarists". The notion of death is, again, a central element in projecting the artificiality of pre-existent, a structure whose pattern and coherence is based exclusively on past aesthetic values. Direct and offensive, without leaving any room for subtleties the text denounces the "romantic", "sentimental" facade of the city which "murmurs invitations to all visitors of the world."³¹

Shouldn't I compare your gondoliers to grave diggers, who dig in a rhythm, deep pits in a flooded cemetery?³²

What is been dismissed here is not the city as a whole, but rather its constructed facade, which becomes an impediment for Venice to live in the present. Contrary to what seems to be suggested by these texts, the futurists do not lack the respect and reverence inspired by the genuine cemeteries. In fact they argue that even those spaces have not been spared from the artificiality of the cultural discourse. "Down with all marble-chippers who are cluttering up . . . and profaning our cemeteries!"³³ To enhance even more its symbolic value within the cultural discourse, the allegory of the museum is extended to the whole country. Not only is Italy covered with "museums like so many graveyards", but Italy itself becomes a "land of the dead, a vast Pompeii, white with sepulchres" with fixed aesthetic values. Indeed these analogies are projected on to the state of Italian culture, a culture where, the futurists argue, "the traditional aesthetic laws reigned supreme"³⁴.

I should point out, however, that the futurists were not the first to challenge the institutionalized aesthetic values of museum. As early as the mid 19th century, Baudelaire, without dismissing the validity of this institution, had, however, perceived the limitations imposed by the Salon, and implicitly of the Academy, as well as the consequences of exclusively studying past traditions. More blatant are the comments made by artists as different as Courbet, Pissarro, Cezanne, or Nolde who have acknowledged the shifting role of the museum within the artistic discourse of the late 19th and the early 20th century. Cezanne moderately stated that the Louvre should be only an intermediary, and that the artist must free oneself from all schools. Courbet's rhetorical, yet blunt proposition, foreshadowing the futurist rhetoric, that a "vast bonfire should be made of the Louvre and all its contents" was similar in both tone and content to that of Pissarro, who has suggested that "all necropolises of art should be burned." Equally significant is Nolde's comment in a 1912 text which echoes and parallels futurists' concerns. "Our museums are becoming larger and fuller, and they are growing fast. I am no friend of these vast agglomerations, which suffocate us with their size."³⁵

I do not want to suggest here that the dismissal of the museum as a focal aesthetic standard was widely expressed by others, rather I want to point out again Futurism's ability not only to synthesize previously introduced ideas, but also to present them with an unprecedented forcefulness in accessible, yet memorable laconic phrases. Once again Futurism's aim to reach a mass audience with an advertising-like mechanism, proved to be an efficient tactic. There are very few who recall Pissarro, Nolde's or even Courbet's stance towards the museum, while the futurists' view became a "stigma" which, too often, has overshadowed the profound implications of their theory.

"We will destroy the museums . . . Turn aside the canals to flood the museums! . . . Oh! the joy of seeing the glorious old canvases bobbing adrift . . . !"³⁶ Needless to say this never happened, nor had the futurists actually intended to do so. However, the rebellious stance of Futurism was neither gratuitous nor superficial. Dismissing the museum as the allegorical representation of the contemporary cultural discourse in which "the tyranny of the notions of harmony and good taste"³⁷

were the sole attributes of the arts, and attacking the “worn-out prototype of the Beautiful and the Great”³⁸, Futurism embarked on a relentless crusade not only to revitalize Italian culture, but also to re-evaluate and redefine the concept of the notion of art.

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Notes:

1. “We Abjure Our Symbolist Masters, the Last Lovers of the Moon”, *Marinetti, Selected Writings*, R.W. Flint editor, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1972), p. 66.
2. “Manifesto of the Futurist Painters”, 1910, in *Futurist Manifestos*, Umbro Apollonio, ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973) English translation. p. 24.
3. “Founding Manifesto”, in *Futurismo & Futurismi*, exhibition catalogue, Pontus Hulten, editor, (Milan: Bompiani 1986), p. 516. English text.
4. “Manifesto of the Futurist Painters”, Apollonio, op. cit., p. 24.
5. “Manifesto of the Futurist Painters”, p. 24.
6. The rejection of the past has become central to the avant-garde and Roland Barthes has proposed a definition of the avant-garde in which “death” plays the key role. “Being [part] of the avant-garde means understanding death; being *arriere-garde* is to still love it.” Quoted by Giovanni Lista, *Les Futuristes*, (Paris: Henri Veyrier, 1988), p. 20.
7. Ironically, the vehement rejection of the past does not have a pivotal role position in the visual vocabulary of the futurists.
8. “Manifesto of the Futurist Painters”, in Apollonio, p. 26.
9. “Founding Manifesto”, in Hulten, p. 516. The relationship between the museum and death has been discussed also by contemporary critics such as Douglas Crimp in his essay, “On the Museum’s Ruins” in *The Anti-Aesthetics, Essays on Post-modern Culture*, Hal Foster, editor, (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1986), pp. 43–57.
10. “Founding Manifesto”, p. 516.
11. “Manifesto of the Futurist Painters”, in Apollonio, op. cit., p. 25.
12. “Manifesto of the Futurist Painters”, p. 25.
13. “The Exhibitors to the Public”, manifesto, 1912 in *Theories of Modern Art*, Herschell B. Chipp, editor, (Los Angeles and Berkeley, University of California Press, 1972), p. 298.
14. “Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto” 1910, In Apollonio, op. cit., p. 29.
15. Mario Morasso, *La Vita Moderna nell’Arte*, (Torino: Fratelli Bocca, Editori,

1904). This book is a critical account of the Fifth Venice Biennale in 1903, which was organized and structured in concordance with *Il nuovo Regolamento* for the show established in 1902. The significance of Morasso's analysis is that it underlines the numerous shortcomings of the exhibition, and, foreshadowing the futurists, heightens the perpetuating aesthetic standards.

16. "Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto" 1910, in Apollonio, op. cit., p. 27.

17. Papini, "Le Passe n'existe pas", reprinted in *Futurisme, Manifestes, Proclamations, Documents*, Giovanni Lista editor, (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1973), p. 92-3. My translation.

18. "The Symbolist Masters . . ." in Marinetti, op. cit., p. 66.

19. Andre Ibels, from the newspaper *La Vie de Paris*, (n. d.) reprinted in *Le Premier Manifeste du Futurisme*, Jean-Pierre A. De Villiers, editor, (Ottawa: Editions de l'Universite d' Ottawa, 1986) p. 161.

20. "Weights, Measures and Prices of Artistic Genius", manifesto, 1914, in Hulten, ed., p. 569.

21. I am referring in particular here to Jocavec Derrida *The Truth in Painting*, (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1983), Michel Foucault's "Panopticism" in *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow, editor, (1984), and "What is an Author?" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, Donald S. Bouchard, editor, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), Samuel Weber *Institutions and Interpretations*, (Minneapolis: UMP, 1987), and ??? Preziosi *Rethinking Art History. Meditations on a Coy Science*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989). See also Louga Crimp, "The Postmodern Museum" in (*Parachute* 46, Mar.-May, 1987, 61-67) or Parruia Mainardi, "Postmodern History at the Musee d'Orsay" (*October* 41, Summer 1987, 109-127). The recent growing interest in an in depth analysis of the museum and its role within the cultural discourse is responsible for many new articles and books on this subject published in the last two years.

22. "Manifesto of the Futurist Painters", Apollonio, p. 25.

23. Preziosi, (1989) Chapter Three, "The Panoptic Gaze and the Anamorphic Archive", p. 75.

24. Manifesto of the Futurist Painters, p. 26.

25. "Founding Manifesto", p. 516.

26. "Manifesto of the Futurist Painters", p. 24.

27. "Manifesto of the Futurist Painters", p. 26.

28. "Weights, Measures and Prices of Artistic Genius", Hulten, p. 570.

29. "Against Passeist Venice", manifesto, in Hulten, p. 596. To maximize the impact of their inflammatory statements, the entire text is composed of only four, very brief paragraphs.

30. "Discours Futuriste Aux Venetiens". 1910, Lista (1973), p. 113. My translation.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. "Manifesto of the Futurist Painters", p. 26.

34. "Manifesto of the Futurist Painters", p. 25.

35. Chipp, op. cit., chapters on Post-Impressionism and German Expressionism, pp. 19, 23 and 272. It is significant to mention that the article published in the New York newspaper *The Sun* commenting on the emergence of Futurism and its breakthrough manifesto, mentions the similarities between Courbet's comments and the futurist desire to destroy the museums. See de Villiers, op. cit., p. 171.

36. "Founding Manifesto", in Hulten, pp. 514-16.

37. "Manifesto of the Futurist Painters", Apollonio, p. 26.

38. "The Variety Theater", manifesto, 1913, in Hulten, pp. 588-90.

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The Anatomy of a Propaganda Event: the Mostra della rivoluzione fascista, 1932

On the morning of October 28, 1932, the tenth anniversary of the Fascist assumption of power, Benito Mussolini inaugurated the most enduring propaganda event of the Fascist dictatorship. As the *Duce* reviewed the assembled honor guards and passed the cheering crowds to open the doors of the *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista*, Fascism invited Italians and foreigners alike to experience and participate in the regime's representation of itself. The *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* recreated, through a melange of art, documentation, relics and historical simulations, the years 1914 to 1922, as interpreted by Fascism in its tenth year in power. The exhibition's twenty-three rooms focused on each year from the beginning of World War I until October 1922 and crescendoed in a *Sala del Duce* and a *Sacrario dei Martiri*.

While the show centered on the past, the actual focus was the future. The *Mostra's* celebration and evocation of Fascism's history and rise to power occurred in the early 1930's, the period of the regime's "reaching out to the people" and cultural expansion. The years 1929 to 1935 witnessed Fascism's consent-building programs, such as the draining of the Pontine marshes, the construction of the Fascist "new towns", the wars on tuberculosis and infant mortality. In this context, the *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* constituted a mass culture referendum on Fascism to date. The exhibition's *Partito Nazionale Fascista* promoters worked to capture the allegiance of an Italian mass audience. With the show, the regime reached out to the whole of Italian society

and hoped that at least one of the *Mostra's* many messages would strike a responsive chord in the various attending publics. The not so hidden message asked for consent for continued Fascist rule.

The *Mostra* offers a case study of the organization of culture during Fascism's period of greatest mass support and clues to an understanding of public responses to that culture. How did the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* produce a propaganda event which both met its own political need for legitimization and responded to the cultural needs of a broad cross-section of the Italian public? The answer must be sought on two levels: (1) the aesthetic and ichnographical and (2) the organizational. Fascist Party organizers used incentive and experimented with developing mass culture techniques in order to attract spectators. The *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista*, soon after its opening, was seen as a popular mass-media event and a *de rigueur* cultural experience. Examination of the dual mechanism of "aesthetics" and "mass culture event" reveals the way in which Fascism produced a propaganda exhibition which received critical and popular acclaim, while also giving the regime the consent it sought.

Since the fall of Fascism in 1945, historians, art historians and architectural historians have debated the nature of the relationship between Fascism and culture. Initial studies placed the cultural artifacts produced under Fascism in two camps—as either the work of regime propagandist, and therefore devoid of intrinsic artistic value, or as works separate from political and social conditions.¹ More recently, art and culture under Fascism has come to be seen as shaped by the interaction between the regime and artists and the public.² As this discussion of the *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* will show, culture under Fascism took the form it did for a number of reasons, ranging from Fascism's search for consent to the internal aesthetic concerns of artists to the cultural tastes of spectators.

After ten months of preparation, the *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* opened in Rome at the *Palazzo delle Esposizioni* on October 28, 1932. The director, Dino Alfieri, then President of the *Istituto Fascista di Cultura* in Milan and a Parliamentary deputy, had devised a solicitation system in order to attain the artifacts which made up the exhibition.³ The Fascist Party newspaper, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, described the artifacts sent from all over Italy as "dei piu importante e significa-

tivi cimeli, fotografie, manifesti, autografi, reliquie, giornali, pubblicazioni..."⁴ In total, "ministeri, prefetti, segretari federali, musei, biblioteche, privati..." contributed 18,400 items to the *Mostra*.⁵ This organizational technique involved a vast number of people from various constituencies and gave the impression that the exhibition was the product of many and varied hands. If a Senator or a local Fascist leader sent in a clipping or a photo, he had personally contributed to the regime's reproduction of itself and was, therefore, central to the construction of Fascism.

Teams of historians and artists organized the *Mostra* into twenty-three exhibition rooms. As noted, one of the two critical elements of the *Mostra*'s success lay in the use of an aesthetic which beckoned the viewer into the Fascist experience and manipulated emotions to a desired end. The vibrant, modern and evocative aesthetic of the show incorporated contemporary Italian and international artistic developments. Mussolini had ordered the *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* to be "cosa d'oggi, modernissima dunque, e audace, senza malinconici ricordi degli stili decorativi del passato".⁶ The show also had to be "senza precedenti, nuovissima, modernissima, fascitissima".⁷ Taking this into consideration, Alfieri and C.E. Oppo, who Alfieri had recruited to oversee the artists, courted the Italian art world's most prominent figures. As with other artistic institutions under Fascism, explicitly anti-Fascist artists were excluded from state and party patronage. However, beyond this base qualification, little discrimination took place. In the end, the artists singled out were "architetti, pittori, scultori, tutti provenienti da scuole artistiche diversi...".⁸

An invitation to work on the *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* was an invitation to breathe life into the artifacts of Fascism, to take them and re-incarnate them into relics, spiritual objects and inspirational touchstones. Artists from a range of schools and histories accepted the challenge. All the predominant Italian modern movements were represented: Futurism by Enrico Prampolini, Gerardo Dottori, Antonio Sant'Agata, Aldo Carpinetti; *Novecento* by Mario Sironi, Achille Funi, and Domenico Rambelli; Rationalism by Giuseppe Terragni, Adalberto Libera, and Mario De Renzi; "Return to order" and *Strapaese* by Mino Maccari and Leo Longanesi. The list of contributors read like a roll call of leading inter-war Italian artists.

While the artists came from diverse backgrounds and movements, a common approach to the material linked them to one another. Much of the aesthetic construction of the *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* centered on the utilization of repeated, simple architectonic forms, such as triangles and circles, of photomontage, extracted slogans, typography and enlarged photographs.⁹ The artists shared a common faith in the malleability of the artifacts and the possibility of using modernist artistic construction such as collage and photomontage to make them speak a number of messages. One reviewer believed that photomontage “imprime all’intera rassegna il suo più squisito e inconfondibile carattere oculare”.¹⁰ The exhibition felt the imprint of two primary aesthetic philosophies: the Futurist practice of *plastica murale* and the Soviet Constructivist inspired notion of creating self-enclosed environments. The Futurist contribution entailed a dependence upon projected three-dimensional constructions which gave the walls a plasticity and movement. The artists of the *Mostra* borrowed photomontage and the idea of reshaping pre-existing architecture from the avant-gardes of the Soviet Union, such as El Lissitzky. These common threads gave the exhibition its underpinning of aesthetic vibrancy. A shared relationship to the artifacts allowed varied aesthetic languages to blend and produce a coherent whole.

Alfieri allotted the liturgically central aspects of the *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* to the most experimental and modern artists. Four elements emerged as the most lasting from the exhibition: the facade, the *Sala del 1922*, *Sala della Marcia su Roma* and the *Sacrario dei martiri*. These four, with their complicated texts, articulated the most emotional aspects of the show. The facade, as the beckoning image, drew spectators in with its imposing specter of power and modernity. The Room of 1922 manipulated frenzied images of the social, political and economic crisis leading to the March on Rome, rousing passions of anger and allegiance. The rooms celebrating the Fascist takeover offered a moment of resolution and epiphany. Finally, the show’s core cycle was completed by the silent and intense of the Chapel of the Fallen.

The rooms of the exhibition played out the cycle of crisis, redemption, resolution: the first fourteen rooms traced Italian intervention in World War I, the postwar crisis, the rise of Fascism and the Fascist victory. With the Fascist takeover, depicted in *Sala Q*, the chronological

approach ended and the show concluded with the *Salone d'onore*, the *Galleria dei Fasci*, and the *Sacrario dei martiri*.¹¹ As the Fascist coup symbolized the end of history and a resolution of all national conflicts, the rooms which followed its depiction dealt with timeless subjects.

Rationalist architects Adalberto Libera and Mario De Renzi completely covered the pre-existing nineteenth-century beaux arts face of the *Palazzo delle Esposizioni* and replaced the heavily ornamented facade of 1882 with a Rationalist metal one. Over a thirty-eight meter long "pompeian" red metal archway, stood the words, MOSTRA DELLA RIVOLUZIONE FASCISTA in red letters. Over this arch rose four metal styled *fasci*. These imposing *fasci*, which were visible for a great distance, stood twenty-five meters and were made of "lamiera di rame brunito e ossidato, su armature di acciaio".¹² On either side of the building stood two, six meter tall X's "costruiti in lamiera." The rectangular archway entered upon an atrium surrounded by arches which carried the visitor into the exhibition.

The facade, like the show itself, presented a mix of concurrent messages. The long rectangular arch over a bank of doors beckoned to be entered. At the same time, the immense *fasci* towering over the crowded Roman shopping street humbled and minimized the individuality of the attender. The stark metal simplicity of the facade in contrast to everything surrounding it made a bold statement about the regime's power. The bare machine-like *fasci* advertised the regime's decision to represent itself as modern, while the reconstruction of a triumphal arch out of the four column-like *fasci* testified to Fascism's identification with the past.¹³ The primary two iconographical elements of the facade, the *fasci* and the Roman numeral X, harkened back to Imperial Rome. At the same time, the stark, stylized *fasci* evoked images of modern war, of bayonets and swords.¹⁴ There was no confusion as to the symbolic universe offered by the facade: the eye first caught the metal *fasci* proclaiming the power of the State, then the X which announced the State's temporal reign, and finally the title of the event.

While the facade came to be one of the most reproduced images of the show, the *Sala del 1922* by Giuseppe Terragni and the *Sala della Marcia su Roma* by Mario Sironi offer, perhaps, the best clues to the contribution of aesthetics to the success of the exhibition. Cut diagonally by a wall and surrounded by semi-circles of display cases,

the *Sala del 1922* was a frenetic mass of inter-connecting photomontages, collages, cut-outs, all moving at diagonal angles. The room projected a “fantasia terramotatta, che scardina ogni angolo, ogni porzione delle superfici aggredite dall’inconsueto allestimento, destrutturando lo spazio espositivo”.¹⁵ The themes of the room ranged from the continued martyrdoms of Fascist squad members, to accelerating parliamentary crises, to the birth of the first Fascist para-state organizations. Below the canvass-draped ceiling, hung an enormous X, for year 10:

Questo plastico è completamente coperto di bandiere socialiste ed anarchiche messe in penombra e le bandiere stesse, volendosi dimostrare che nell’anno 1922 ha termine la vera efficienza dei partiti sovversivi, sono inchiodate sull’armature da pugnali illuminati da riflettori.¹⁶

One side of the diagonal wall narrated Fascist punitive actions of 1922, with clippings and artifacts. Above the display, hung a series of merging profiles in which Mussolini’s black profile fused with the silver outline of Italy, all framed by the words “Inquadramento delle forze giovanili”. This collage symbolized the emergence of the institutions of the nascent Fascist state out of the disarray and created the ichnographical conflation of *Italy–Mussolini–Fascism*. Another segment of the wall bore Mussolini’s slogan, “The Last May 1st!”, supported by a cutout figure pushing away the crutch of socialism. In the adjacent corner stood a ceiling-high figure composed of a prison-suit of metal strips, entitled, “Il lavoratore irretito dalla scioperomania”. The “Room of 1922” reached a climax with a panel called “Adunate”. The lower section bore airplane propellers constructed from photographs of mass rallies. These propellers faced diagonally up towards hundreds of plaster hands, all pointing to the sky in a disembodied Roman salute.

Sironi’s *Sala della Marcia su Roma* used an imposing monumentality to calm the spectator after the frenetic crises depicted in the earlier rooms. The Room of the March on Rome centered immense, overpowering, but minimal images. The austerity of *Sala Q*, after the earlier rooms, offered a respite, an opportunity for the viewer to feel the restive powers of Fascism. Sironi merged the symbols of Fascism with those of the Italian nation-state. The ceiling was tricolor, as was the color scheme of the entire room. The wall facing the entrance displayed three images: (1) white letters with red borders, declaring *LA MARCIA su*

ROMA, below (2) a bassrelief of a stylized eagle in flight which (3) supported a relief of the national flag adorned with the cross of the House of Savoy. Together the shapes of the flag and the eagle produced the silhouette of a *fascio*. This three-dimensional trilogy of Fascism-imperial eagle-Italian flag projected the unity of the old and the new and offered a message of stability and consolidation. The head of the eagle projected off the wall and into the exhibition “come presaghe del prossimo impennarsi del destino”.¹⁷ Bare except for two images, the opposing wall was Sironi’s most powerful. A three-dimensional, wall length Roman sword engraved with the intersecting words DUX/ITALIA shattered the red chain of Socialism which hung in pieces from the wall.¹⁸ The Roman sword, the symbol of Italy united to its *Duce* in a resurrection of Roman glory, smashed the strangle-hold of Socialism. *Il Popolo d’Italia* hailed the “bloody chain” which had to be cut as a “prelude to the flight of the eagle”.¹⁹

The Room of the March led into Sironi’s “grave and silent” Salon of Honor.²⁰ With the Salon of Honor and the Gallery of *Fasci* which followed it, Sironi produced self-sustaining psychological environments. The Salon of Honor was based around an exedra dominated by a statue of Mussolini bursting out of a wall. Below the statue stood the enormous abstracted letters DUX. The statue/DUX combination overlooked the “den”, the “severe cell of the first seat of *Il Popolo d’Italia*, the real focus of the room.”²¹ Inside a simple, square building, Mussolini’s office from 1914 until 1920 was re-created and canonized for the viewer. The only ornamentation of construction were plain pillars clothed in reproductions of *Il Popolo d’Italia* and a simple doorway through which the relics were observed. The re-constituted office offered a slice of Fascism in its radical movement phase: Mussolini’s paper-covered desk strewn with hands-grenades and a carelessly placed revolver; behind the desk hung a black flag with skull and cross-bones. The disordered room, claimed the catalog, was “a living documentation of the den from which came the orders of the insurrection”.²² The bare architecture of Salon of Honor, with its focus on (1) the image and word of Mussolini as authoritarian consolidator and (2) environmental recreation of Mussolini as radical revolutionary leader, gave the cult of Mussolini a symbology.

The *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* implied a number of contradic-

tory messages about the future of Fascism; it offered simultaneous images of revolution and consolidation and it celebrated Fascism in its movement phase while also elevating the cult of Mussolini. However, above all, the exhibition worked to convince the viewer that Fascism had been the saviour of the nation. The interpretation of the events of 1914 to 1922 portrayed an Italy besieged on all sides by internal and external enemies bent on national disintegration. The rooms covering the years 1914 to 1922 depicted images of “wolf-like parliamentarians”, backstabbing Allies, insidious Soviets and evil socialists. The exhibition, with its repeated fusion of the symbols of the Liberal, pre-Fascist state with those of Fascism, declared that Fascism and the Italian state were now one. Fascism enthroned a new national symbolic universe and conflated the national cult with the Fascist cult.

With the exhibition, the regime produced the first event of a shared national culture. For the first time in modern Italian history there existed a cultural experience which resonated—albeit in different ways—with a significant cross-section of the Italian population from a range of regions and classes.²³ While Fascism’s primary goal in promoting such an event was support for the Fascist project, in the process it attained the secondary goal of contributing to the creation of an Italian national consciousness.

The *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* borrowed from both the secular rituals of the French Revolution and the religious ones of Christianity. The rhythm of the show—crisis, understanding, redemption—paralleled the Christian liturgy, while the secular religion of the state and the canonization of its symbols built on the legacy of the French Revolution. The celebration of the “glorious dead” combined a Christian reverence for martyrdom with the nationalist celebration of allegiance to the *patria*.²⁴ The exhibition was repeatedly described in language such as, “un atto di fede e omaggio agli Caduti...rivendicazione di fiere opere compiute ed una esaltazione solenne anche dei più ignoranti sacrifici...”.²⁵ The religious imagery spilled into such assertions as, “ogni visita diventa un pellegrinaggio”.²⁶

The powerful aesthetics of the *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* were supported by an orchestrated reaching out to the masses. In order for the exhibition to be a tool of consent and legitimation, the regime had to expose large audiences to it. The dictatorship courted audiences

through an incentive policy which included travel discounts, organized group excursions, and rotating honor guards. Throughout its two years on the Via Nazionale, the *Mostra* offered 70% train fare discounts to any visitor who had his or her train ticket validated at the exhibition ticket office. Organized group trips included school children, members of Fascist organizations, municipal works, ex-soldiers, teachers' unions, nuns.²⁷ American Naval Cadets, farmers from Treviso, and teachers from France all took advantage of the discount opportunities.²⁸ The exhibition also brought together Fascist officials and members of Fascist organizations through the system of rotating honor guards. Each day that the show was open to the public, a file of daily rotating and paid honor guards flanked the doors. This gave many party members the opportunity to visibly participate in the *Mostra*.

Popular response to the *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* exceeded the Fascist National Party's greatest anticipations. Attendance steadily increased and remained so intense through the exhibition's planned six month existence that the closing date was initially extended from April 21, 1933 to July 31, 1933 and, finally, to October 28, 1934.²⁹ Interest in the *Mostra* proved so great and pervasive that within two months of the inauguration one reviewer claimed:

Non v'è oramai cittadino, in tutta la Penisola, il quale non sappia che essa è una pagina di storia, che balza calda e fremente da una documentazione inconfutabile e definitiva, perchè d'ogni fatto possiamo essere testimonianze.³⁰

Attendance figures supported assertions of widespread interest: in the first seven months (October 29, 1932–May 23, 1933) 1,236,151 visitors attended the exhibition and by the closing date of October 28, 1934, three million spectators had passed through the metal *fasci* of the entrance to the *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista*.³¹

The *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* revealed Fascism's ability, in the middle years of its rule, to respond to Italian cultural needs. Through an effective combination of experimental aesthetics and mass cultural organizational techniques, the Fascist regime offered cultural consumers an event which resonated with their own identities as Italians and spectators. The exhibition swept up the visitor in the representation of his or her own history and allowed artists to participate in the con-

struction of that history. In return, artists and spectators gave their continued consent to Fascist rule.

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Notes:

1. Umberto Silva's *Ideologia e arte del fascismo* is an example of the first approach. Umberto Silva, *Ideologia e arte del fascismo* (Milan: Mazzotta, 1973).

2. In recent years, a number of works have attempted to determine the social and cultural bases of Fascist policies. Victoria de Grazia's *The Culture of Consent* which deals with Fascist leisure-time organizations is the model for this approach. Victoria de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1979). See also, Laura Malvano, *Fascismo e politica dell'immagine* (Bollati Boringhieri: Turin, 1988).

3. *Archivio Centrale dello Stato*, Mostra delle rivoluzioni fascista, Buste 1-275. The Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome has a document collection entitled, *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista*, of the tagged and collated items from the show. Each clipping, artifact or photograph has a tag which details from whom it was sent and whether or not it was used in the *Mostra*.

4. "Per l'organizzazione della Mostra del fascismo", *Il Popolo d'Italia*, January 5, 1932.

5. Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista: Guida Storica* (Rome: Partito Nazionale Fascista, 1933), p. 53. The exhibition published two guidebooks, both by Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi. The one cited here was longer and included numerous reproductions. The earlier one was more strictly a guidebook: Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, *Guida della Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* (Firenze: Stabilimenti Grafici A. Vallecchi, 1932).

6. Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista: Guida Storica*, p. 8.

7. Mussolini's directive as reported in Gigi Maino, "La mostra delle rivoluzioni fascista". *La Rassegna Italiana*, vol. 16, n. 178, p. 206.

8. Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista: Guida Storica*, p. 9.

9. Giorgio Ciucci, "L'autorappresentazione del fascismo", *Rassegna*, n. 10, June 1982, p. 49.

10. Alberto Neppi, "L'Opera degli artisti alla Mostra della rivoluzione fascista," *Rassegna istruzione artistica*, November-December 1932, p. 338.

11. The *fascio* was the symbol appropriated from ancient Rome by Fascism. The

fasci were double edged swords bound with rods and carried by the magistrates of ancient Rome. They were the symbol of justice and unity of the state. Fascism also used the term to refer to its fighting squads, the *fasci di combattimento*.

12. Margarita Sarfatti, "Architettura, arte e simbolo alla Mostra del Fascismo", *Architettura*, January 1933, p. 3.

13. Giorgio Ciucci described the facade as a triumphal arch, with its four fasci acting as columns. Giorgio Ciucci, in a presentation to "Istituto Gramsci di Bologna", April 9, 1987.

14. Giorgio Ciucci, "L'autorappresentazione del fascismo", *Rassegna*, p. 49.

15. Ada Francesca Marciano, *Giuseppe Terragni: Opera completa, 1925-43* (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1987) p. 74.

16. Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista: Guida Storica*, p. 191.

17. Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista: Guida Storica*, p. 195.

18. *Dux* is Latin for *Duce*, or leader.

19. "La Mostra della Rivoluzione", *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia*, Year XI, November 1932, p. 51.

20. Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista: Guida Storica*, p. 211.

21. Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista: Guida Storica*, p. 215.

22. Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista: Guida Storica*, p. 215.

23. For more on the late development of national cultures and the attempt to bring the masses into the project see: George Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses* (New York, 1975) and E. J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1983).

24. George Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses* (New York, 1975) p. 90.

25. Cornelio di Marzio, "La Mostra del Fascismo", *Bibliografia Fascista*, n. 4, May 1932, pp. 259 and 264.

26. Mino Maccari, "Il carattere popolare della Mostra della rivoluzione fascista", *Illustrazione Italiana*, April 2, 1933.

27. ACS, PNF Direttorio—Ufficio Stralcio, Busta 271, fascicolo 2.

28. ACS, PNF Direttorio—Ufficio Stralcio, Busta 271, fascicolo 2.

29. "La mostra della rivoluzione (da Via Nazionale a Via dell'Impero)", *Illustrazione Italiana*, 28 ottobre 1934, p. 668 and ACS ?).

30. F. P. Mule, "La Mostra della rivoluzione fascista", *Capitolium*, January 1933, p. 1.

31. ACS, PNF Direttorio—Ufficio Stralcio, Busta 271, fascicolo 3, "Verbale, 7 novembre 1934.

Pasolini's Cinema of Regression

Pier Paolo Pasolini's most famous piece of film theory is "The Cinema of Poetry" (1965), in which he revives (consciously?) a distinction made almost forty years earlier by Viktor Shklovsky between a prosaic cinema and a poetic one. According to Shklovsky, "[in] its plot construction, its semantic composition, a prose work is based primarily on a combination of everyday situations," while "in a poetic film the technical-formal features predominate over the semantic features."¹ Similarly, Pasolini defines the cinema of prose as the cinema of classical narrative, which is based on a repression of the cinema's poetic qualities. With the establishment of the conventions of the cinematic prose narrative, the cinema's "irrational, oneiric, elementary, and barbaric elements were forced below the level of consciousness."²

Pasolini identifies cinema with dreams and memory because both are based on the signification of images. This identification places the poetic cinema closer to the primary process than the cinema of prose. Plot becomes a form of secondary revision, turning cinema into a "genre of escapist performance, with a number of consumers unimaginable for all other forms of expression."³ Thus the cinema of the prose narrative is a deformation of the true cinema, the cinema of poetry, a deformation caused by the consumerism that Pasolini saw all around him and which he hated for its ability to degrade everything it touched. However, just as psychic repression never destroys the repressed content, so too "the fundamentally irrational nature of cinema cannot be eliminated."⁴ Pasolini finds moments of poetry even

in prose narrative films. In his own films, he sought to restore the primary nature of cinema. His is a cinema of regression.

Freud distinguishes three kinds of regression in *The Interpretation of Dreams*:

(a) *topographical* regression, [i.e., from consciousness toward the unconscious] . . . ; (b) *temporal* regression, in so far as what is in question is a harking back to older psychical structures; and (c) *formal* regression, where primitive methods of expression and representation take the place of the usual ones.⁵

All three types of regression find expression in Pasolini's films. His attempt to move from the cinema of prose, of rationality, toward a poetic cinema related to the primary processes is a form of topographical regression. The nostalgia of many of the films parallels their pregenital eroticism; both are forms of temporal regression, one in the broad sense of the word, the other in the more properly Freudian sense of a return to an earlier stage of libidinal development. Most importantly, formal regression takes the shape of Pasolini's search for a more poetic narrative structure. Despite labeling narrative as typical of prose cinema, he never rejects narrative itself. Instead he rejects the dominant mode of narrative (as in the classic Hollywood film) based on the Aristotelian dicta of a unified plot tracing one action completed by a protagonist, in which the action proceeds according to laws of probability and necessity and the characters maintain a psychological consistency.

If, as Peter Wollen has suggested, film makers write theory primarily to explain their most recent work, the most logical film to begin with would be *Il Vangelo Secondo Matteo* (*The Gospel According to Matthew*), which came out in 1964, the year before Pasolini wrote "The Cinema of Poetry." But in fact, elements of a poetic regression can be found in his previous two fictional features, *Accatone* (1961) and *Mamma Roma* (1962). *Accatone* contains a dream sequence in which the title character attends his own funeral, a sequence which Pasolini called "epic-mythic-fantastic," adding that "these aren't typical characteristics of the petit bourgeoisie."⁶ By locating the cinema of poetry in opposition to bourgeois cinema, Pasolini links his aesthetics to his politics. Because the bourgeoisie is a totalizing force of corruption and hypocrisy, it cannot be defeated but can be eluded through

regression to the pre-bourgeois, which Pasolini identified as the peasant, the archaic, the unconscious. Besides the dream sequence, the episodic nature of the narrative also gives *Accatone* its epic-mythic-fantastic quality. Like the epic, *Accatone* has an episodic plot tracing the history of an individual, without the teleology and unity of the classic film narrative. The same can be said of *Mamma Roma*. In this case, the narrative's episodic nature is underscored by a repeated shot of the desolate view from Mamma Roma's coveted high-rise apartment. This shot returns like a refrain several times in the course of the film, and becomes the film's final shot. This use of a refrain is a link between the cinema and oral culture, itself a regression towards the past away from the present of mass media communication.

Similarly, *Gospel* preserves the episodic structure of the original instead of presenting the event as a seamless plot in the manner of the Hollywood Bible picture. Pasolini makes no attempt to stitch the episodes together to provide a continuity; rather, the episodic structure serves to emphasize the contradictory nature of the gospel. Christ is by turns severe and gentle, imperious and humble. This emphasis on contradiction constitutes an example of formal regression, a move toward the primary process. The kind of narrative continuity that Pasolini discards can be seen as similar to Freud's secondary revision, which "fills up the gaps in the dream-structure" so that "the dream loses its appearance of . . . disconnectedness and approximates to the model of an intelligible experience."⁷ Christian Metz specifies that cinema's similarity to dreaming is limited to a film being "a dream in which secondary revision does nearly everything by itself, a dream where the primary process plays only a furtive and intermittent role, a role of gap-maker, a role of *escape*."⁸

Pasolini introduces new regressive strategies in *Gospel* intended to increase the role of the primary and make the film more poetic and thus anti-bourgeois. One is the choice to film a work written two thousand years earlier. Freud himself linked psychic regression to the return to a historical past: "the primitive stages can always be re-established; the primitive mind is, in the fullest meaning of the word, imperishable."⁹ Another strategy introduced in *Gospel* is the depiction of storytelling. One might expect the parables to be absent from the film as undramatic events, but Pasolini leaves them in as another ingredient in the film's

regressive nature. Storytelling is usually associated with the parallel prehistories of childhood and antiquity. Walter Benjamin lamented that storytelling began to die in the modern age because "experience has fallen in value."¹⁰ Benjamin, like Pasolini, identifies economic forces as the suppressers of experience (or "reality" in Pasolinian terms); both see storytelling as a direct transmission of experience/reality from teller to listener.

For Benjamin, the rise of the communications media and of information doomed storytelling. Information, based on plausibility and verifiability, devalues the magical and the miraculous in favor of explanation. With storytelling, "marvelous things are related with the greatest accuracy, but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader."¹¹ Thus storytelling, like poetry, is positioned as closer to the primary than modern forms of narrative.

After *Gospel*, Pasolini was to set almost all of the rest of his films in the past, varying the degrees of remoteness from antiquity to the days of the Salò government. *Teorema* (1968), lacking this nostalgic regression to the past, instead introduces a new form of temporal regression that will become increasingly important: depictions of regression to pre-genital forms of sexuality. The narrative structure is once again episodic, but there is no protagonist whose life the episodes trace. Instead there is a central figure, a visitor who acts as a mathematical function; each character who comes in contact with him has a different value after the interaction. The structure resembles a table of three columns of figures: the characters before meeting the visitor, during the visitor's stay, after the visitor leaves.

This narrative structure derives not from the older patterns of myth and epic but from Pasolini's attempt to separate reality and nature. Since the reality expressed in *Teorema* is mostly that of a Milanese bourgeois family and not the archaic reality of the subproletariat or the peasant, Pasolini uses a mechanistic structure to break down the bourgeois reality, to attack it. The narrative events are arranged schematically; the members of the family are introduced one by one, they fall in love with the visitor one by one, and they react to his absence one by one.

Because of the frequent closeups on the visitor's crotch and his universal appeal, he seems to be an embodiment of phallic sexuality,

itself pre-genital because it downplays any notion of sexual difference or reproductive sexuality. His arrival can be seen as a return of the repressed that starts the family on a regression which is perhaps best described as a Lacanian one. That is, they all seem to regress to a pre-symbolic state. Once their contact with the phallic force of the visitor has returned them to a pregenital stage of libidinal organization, they lose their place in the social structure. The mother embarks on a course of compulsive promiscuity. The son becomes an artist, but one dedicated to removing content and intentionality from his work by painting random lines on glass. The daughter becomes catatonic. The father donates his factory to the workers, strips in the train station at the sight of a desirable young man, and runs screaming into the wilderness. All seem to have lost the ability to speak by the end, except the maid. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith explains the difference:

the [bourgeois] characters can only live in bourgeois society, with the family in the heart of it. When that goes, they cannot live in any society at all. But the maid's universe survives, which is that of her peasant origins, a (supposedly) non-bourgeois order, and to this she can return. In other words, she regresses.¹²

The theorem demonstrated by *Teorema* seems to be that regression—libidinal, formal, or temporal—is not just an escape to the mythic, poetic reality suppressed by the bourgeoisie; it is also a weapon to be used against the bourgeoisie.

Pasolini's films based directly on myth, *Edipo Re* (1967) and *Medea* (1970), continue the notion of a more archaic reality that survives. The fact that both the Oedipus and Medea stories exist as myth and as tragedy gives these two films aspects of the fantastic, the epic, and the ritual. His version of Oedipus starts during the Fascist period of Pasolini's own youth, then shifts to antiquity, only to end in contemporary Bologna. Here temporal regression is used to point up the primal underpinnings of modernity that must be embraced and not repressed. The return to the world of antiquity and myth in *Medea* also signals a return to storytelling. The very first scene in the film finds the centaur Chiron telling the young Jason the story of his family. While Medea's country, Colchis, is the site of the primal in the film, the land of ritual (the section of the film set there is virtually without dialog),

Jason's birthright is Corinth, where "everything is secular, modern, refined, cultured."¹³ Brought up in exile from Corinth, Jason is suspended between the primal and the modern. Hence Chiron appears to him in two forms: as centaur and as human. As the human Chiron explains, the centaur is an avatar of an earlier, sacred reality that Jason knew as a child which has been replaced by the desecrated, human version. The centaur remains, mute, as the inspiration for the feelings that the human expresses. This is an almost exact parallel to the relation that Freud describes between the primary and secondary processes:

the primary processes are present in the mental apparatus from the first, while it is only during the course of life that the secondary processes unfold, and come to inhibit and overlay the primary ones.¹⁴

Jason falls in love with Medea because she is still in touch with the sacred reality that he is moving away from. His decision to marry Glauce, the princess of Corinth, marks his rejection of the primitive for the material wealth of the modern. Because of this rejection, Medea regresses to a primal state in which she regains the magic powers she had in Colchis and exacts revenge on Jason by killing Glauce and her own sons. As in *Teorema*, regression becomes a weapon against the repressive force of the modern, although in this case it also destroys the person who wields it.

While *Medea* begins with the telling of a story, Pasolini's next three films, known collectively as the *Trilogy of Life*, use the act of storytelling as a recurrent motif. All three films are adaptations of famous collections of tales: *The Decameron* (1970), *The Canterbury Tales* (1971), and *The Arabian Nights* (1974). They represent also the culmination of Pasolini's regressive strategy and his most optimistic films. This optimism stems mostly from the suspension of narrative closure, which Pasolini associates with death: "death effects a rapid synthesis of a past life . . . this is the way in which *a life becomes a story*."¹⁵ The act of telling a story, conversely, can enhance life. Cramming several tales into each film of the trilogy suspends any closure, since "the transitions between episodes are so abrupt and unexpected that we often find ourselves well into the next tale before we realize that the previous one is over."¹⁶ Blurring the tales' beginnings and endings emphasizes their middles. Such an emphasis allows Pasolini to foreground "the desire

and excess that characterize the middle phase of narrative," as Laura Mulvey puts it.¹⁷ Mulvey goes on to point out that this phase is also "marked by . . . extraordinary events in which the rules and expectations of ordinary existence are left in suspense."¹⁸

This focus on the middle narrative phase opens a space in which regression becomes a pleasurable escape from inhibitions instead of a destructive force. The clothed crotch shots in *Teorema* are replaced by abundant nudity, with an emphasis on the penis second only to the phallic display of gay porn. *The Canterbury Tales* also contains a remarkable amount of pregenital imagery, especially of the anal variety, from the homosexual sodomy that opens the second tale to the demon in Hell at the end who shits clerics. Nowell-Smith points out that *Arabian Nights* seeks to erase sexual difference by blurring the distinctions between male and female beauty.¹⁹

Besides this libidinal regression, the films of the Trilogy also display the types of formal regression found in earlier Pasolini films. The epigraph of *Arabian Nights*—"The complete truth does not lie in one dream but in several"—refers not only to the complex narrative structure but also to the dreamlike quality of the film, in the form of the elaborate coincidences which advance the narrative and the unusual number of special effects. Humor also allows the primary process to emerge at least partly. As the first intelligible line of dialog in *Canterbury Tales* puts it, "Between a jest and a joke, many a truth can be told." The humor of the Trilogy can best be described as carnivalesque. Mulvey summarizes Mikhail Bakhtin's definition of carnival as that which "gloried in the peasant side of the cultural connotations associated with the peasant/noble opposition, the lower part of the body, its functions. . . . Carnival inverted the normal experience of daily life, celebrating pleasure and excess in food, drink, and sex."²⁰ The emphasis on the face in the earlier films is thus displaced to the emphasis on the phallus, which gets nearly as many closeups in the Trilogy as the face does. Carnavalesque humor thus functions as another regressive strategy, liberating the repressed.

Pasolini's last film, *Salò* (1975), probably contains more nudity than the entire Trilogy, but the difference is striking. While the Trilogy exalts the body, *Salò* mortifies it. Pasolini explained this reversal as a rejection of the Trilogy because the sexual revolution, in whose spirit it was

made, had turned out to be just another tool used by consumerist capitalism to expand its hegemony. Pasolini filmed the Trilogy mostly in what he considered to be the non-bourgeois milieus of Naples, northern Africa, and the Middle East because "the last bulwark of reality seemed to be Xinnocent' bodies with the archaic, dark, vital violence of their sexual organs."²¹ After finishing the Trilogy, he decided that "even the reality of 'innocent' bodies has been violated, manipulated, enslaved by consumerist power."²² Pasolini is thus forced to confront the present, which means "adapting to degradation and accepting the unacceptable."²³

Salò is the dramatization of this confrontation. In the course of the film, Pasolini rejects everything—not just his old enemies, the bourgeoisie and the Aristotelian plot, but also all the things he had previously believed in: the body, sex, humor, storytelling, regression. Pasolini abandons the episodic, organic structure of the Trilogy for a schema as rigid as *Teorema*'s. After the opening, the film is divided into three sections, or "Circles" as they are called in reference to Dante's *Inferno*, each one focussing on a different perversion. While the sinners in *The Decameron* escape punishment, and the Hell in *The Canterbury Tales* was reserved mostly for clerics, this man-made Hell punishes the body without regard for innocence or guilt. Sex, the experiencing of one body by another, here becomes a weapon of domination. Physical beauty, the sign of innocence in *Arabian Nights*, here becomes a symptom of vulnerability and submission. The libertines select the most beautiful pair of buttocks and submit its owner to torture. Storytelling, which had been the occasion for the celebration of life and escape from oppression, here becomes merely a blueprint for degradation.

The film moves systematically from the extremely rigid and static action and visual style of the opening to the irrational eruption of the end; in other words, it regresses from being highly "secondarized" to being highly "primary." But while regression in the Trilogy brings one closer to reality, the libertines' regression takes them further away from it, as it did for the bourgeois family in *Teorema*. They reject reality for a corrupt, repressive regression. The carnivalesque humor of the Trilogy is replaced by the nihilistic absurdity of the jokes told by the President. The blurring of sexual difference in *Arabian Nights* is first rejected by

the gender segregation enforced by the libertines, then mocked by their childish behavior in drag. While the sexual behavior is almost entirely at a pregenital stage, the emphasis is on the sadistic forms of anal and oral sexuality.

In all of Pasolini's earlier films, regression became a move away from the conscious towards memory and the unconscious. The libertine regression of *Salò* merely inverts conscious rationality, producing a repressive desublimation of terror, nihilism, pain, and the irrational. By the final orgy of destruction, the libertines have retreated from reality so far that they take turns watching the torture from an upper window through binoculars to distance themselves from the scene even more thoroughly. Meanwhile, two of the young guards clutch each other awkwardly and dance slowly in a circle.

This, the last image from Pasolini's last film, has occasioned more disagreement than any other single shot in his work. The critics who see the film as a rejection of homosexuality and who regard Pasolini's murder as the logical conclusion to his sexual habits tend to read this image as the lowest point of hell, with the young men indifferent to the suffering around them. I would argue that the shot instead marks the revival of Pasolini's interest in regression as the only possible escape from the symbolic structures of the bourgeoisie's pervasive fascism. Instead of a regression to the past, the subproletariat, the Third World, pregenital sexuality, humor, memory, dream, epic, myth, storytelling or any other past strategy, the guards represent the most radical regression of all—back to the imaginary dyad. Having lost faith in all political, social, or sexual solutions, Pasolini retreats as far as possible—back to the moment of the establishment of the ego—but he does not surrender.

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Notes:

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2. Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism* (1972), trans. Ben Lawton and Louise K. Barnett (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 172.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), trans. James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1965), p. 587.
6. Oswald Stack, *Pasolini on Pasolini* (London: Thames and Hudson Limited, 1969), p. 46.
7. Freud, p. 528.
8. Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (1977), trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 123.
9. Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (1970), trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1973), p. 387.
10. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 83-84.
11. Ibid., p. 89.
12. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "Pasolini's Originality" in Paul Willemen, ed. *Pier Paolo Pasolini* (London: British Film Institute, 1977), p. 16.
13. Pasolini, "Pasolini on Film" in Willemen, p. 67.
14. Freud, p. 642.
15. Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, p. 251.
16. Millicent Marcus, "The Decameron: Pasolini as a Reader of Boccaccio," *Italian Quarterly* 82/83, Fall 1980/Winter 1981, p. 178.
17. Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 170.
18. Ibid., p. 171.
19. Nowell-Smith, p. 18.
20. Mulvey, pp. 167-68.
21. Pasolini, *Lutheran Letters* (1976), trans. Stuart Hood (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1983), p. 49.
22. Ibid., p. 50.
23. Ibid., p. 52.

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Sexual Politics in Sixteenth Century Italy: Folengo's Macaronic Misogyny

Male/female relationships in Folengo's *Baldus* are consistently problematic. From the abrupt infatuation Guido feels for Baldovina to the vilification of Berta, Baldus's wife, everything about heterosexuality is suspect. The sexual economy is riddled with tensions between the willful and the rational. Guido elopes with Baldovina because he has been pricked by Cupid's arrow; his son Baldus marries in order to follow the dictates of custom in the rural setting in which he lives.

Baldus is brought up, not by his father (who left on a pilgrimage before the child was born) but by his mother and by Berto Panada, the peasant who took care of Guido and Baldovina after their flight from Paris. Berto is a pastoral ideal, exemplifying the simple virtues of peasant life. He married a country woman at Baldovina's suggestion; she feared that her own reputation would be ruined living with a man who was neither relative nor spouse. Berto's son, Zambellus, is raised as a brother of Baldus. After Berto's death, however, Baldus takes charge of Berto's farm, forcing Zambellus and his wife Lena to work the land for the sake of Baldus and his wife. Although Baldus had fought against people who claimed that he was the illegitimate son of Berto, he gladly enough appropriates Zambellus's patrimony, not having had one from his own father, the pilgrim who never returned. Baldus takes advantage of his situation in Berto's home as elder male child, which makes him the head of household (Montrose, 1981). The

simple-minded peasant Zambellus can only come into his rightful inheritance when Baldus is put into prison.

The main female characters of this epic exercise influence in the sphere of the country household. There is the exceptional case of the witch Pandraga, but even on her enchanted island her activities are domestic and sexual. The sexual aspect cannot, of course, be separated from the duties of the housewife.

Berta, wife of Baldus, gives a rather detailed description of the wife's tasks in her defense of women. She is responding to Tognazzo's vituperation against womankind, in which he remarks that women are worthless, vengeful and the cause of all that is wrong in the world:

Foemina sola potest omnem destruggere terram,
tam bene scit frodas animo componere torto
(VI: 387-88).

Berta's enumeration of women's duties, addressed to Tognazzo, compose what Christine Delphy, in a modern context, has dubbed the "domestic mode of production" (1984):

Quis vestri capitis cerchet, Tognazze, pedocchios,
quis massaricias bruttas lavet atque mudandas,
quis tandem spulicare queat damatina camisam?
Si vobis nulla est mulier, vel baila, vel uxor,
quis gerat officium pelizae, scaldaque letti?
(VI: 518-22).

Women must do the unpleasant chores for which men are too noble, from de-fleaing husbands and children, to washing dirty clothes and undergarments. It is rather amusing how Berta says that there is no one to be the "fur coat" or "bed warmer" if one has neither a "woman, wet-nurse, nor wife" (VI: 521-22). She indicates that men, when it comes to personal care and domestic life, are like infants, needing wet-nurses and mother figures to attend to their needs. The duties of the good wife on behalf of her husband are the same as those done for babies and even for domestic animals: cleaning them, feeding them, and keeping them warm.

While no special education was required or even desired for many girls in the Renaissance, especially those who lived outside of the city

and/or below a certain class level, it was up to mothers to instruct their daughters in the many tasks necessary to run the household. This training, along with good health and a robust constitution, made up the "dowry" of lower class girls (Wiesner, 1987; Klapisch-Zuber, 1985; Ruggiero, 1985). In addition, women were supposed to reproduce these social conditions by having children and bringing them up in this atmosphere of strict division of labor (Martines, 1974).

It is interesting that Baldus, heroic descendant of Guido, famed knight at the Parisian court, should end up in prison because of his unjust usurpation of Zambellus Panada's property. Baldus thinks that he is the victim of grave injustices, since he ought to be admired and obeyed as a member of the noble stock from which he-illegitimately-comes. He is a superior warrior and it takes all of the forces of Cipada to subdue him and put him under lock and key. His dilemma is a complex one, in that his father came from a class in France which was fast becoming obsolete: that of mounted knights. (Martines, 1980; Le Goff, 1988) As power became more centralized (whether in city-states or in incipient nation states, as in France), there was less need for roving warriors, who were often considered a threat to the new social order, and greater emphasis was placed on owning and managing property. A productive mercantile class was displacing a parasitic chivalrous one. Baldus does not "fit" on the country farm nor in the city; he behaves like a feudal lord in dealing with Zambellus.

It is not merely the indeterminate status of Baldus's patrimony which causes him problems—it is also what Kenneth Burke has called the "property in human affections" (1951). Baldus derives his negative view of women from both the knightly tradition (one thinks of Yvain and Erec, for example, who had difficulties in maintaining their chivalrous reputations after getting married) and the monastic one. He ultimately leaves his wife, in order to seek adventures abroad and to rid the world of heresy, most often manifest in female witches. The power that women derive from pacts with the devil is used almost exclusively for sexual puposes: to make men fall in love and stay in love with them; to trick husbands so they won't discover their wives' lovers; to produce abortions so that the fruits of their sins will not be discovered. Baldus's misgivings would seem to be the result of con-

traditions inherent in private ownership and monogamous relationships: what Kenneth Burke writes of as the peculiar situation of private property and private family,

of ownership in the profoundest sense of ownership, the property in human affections, as fetishistically localized in the object of possession, while the possessor is himself possessed by his very engrossment. . . . The single mine-own-ness is thus dramatically split into three principles of possession, possessor, estrangement (threat of loss). Hence, trust and distrust, though *living in* each other, can be shown *wrestling with* each other. *La propriété, c'est le vol*. Property fears theft because it is theft (1951: 166-67).

Baldus's identity is a conflation of birth and social status, which in turn should have determined his education, occupation, marriage, etc. But, as we have seen, his identity is probematized by his parents' illegitimate union and by his mother's precarious social position. Although Baldovina was daughter of the king of France, she has forfeited her claim to her father's wealth by eloping with Guido. Her claims, however, even had she married legitimately according to her father's wishes, would not have been as great as those of a son. In Renaissance society in general, the only share of the patrimony accorded women was their dowry, a one-time settlement of cash and goods such as linens, clothing, foodstuffs.

Baldus's situation, then, moves uneasily between his upbringing in a peasant cottage and his "innate" nobility. Since both his parents are landless, he cannot assume his "rightful" place in the social hierarchy: he is doomed to the social constraints of, on the one hand, an agrarian, rustic existence and, on the other, a mercantile urban world which can only be effected by landed wealthy nobility or newly monied citizens. Baldus is a knight without a king to serve, a comic anachronism in the civic world of the city-state.

Renaissance women, on the other hand, had a more fluid identity: at first they "belonged" to their father and his family, but this was often conceded as, in many respects, a temporary situation. From her father's home a Renaissance woman could either enter a convent as a "bride of Christ," or, what was more likely, she could marry and assume the identity of her husband's family. In both fact and fiction,

however, we find examples of husbands who go to their in-laws' when they have problems with their wives: see, for example, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, day seven, tales four and eight. It appears that the woman's behavior could tarnish the reputation of her natal family long after marriage. But even as this is acknowledged, Renaissance husbands still felt that their honor was highly vulnerable to the dishonor which cuckoldry, the "forked plaque," would bring them.

In addition to Tognazzo's enumeration of the wife's proclivities to make the husband miserable, we have later in Baldus the portrayal of women who make their husbands cuckold. "The very sovereignty that the male absolutely arrogates to himself, as an essential aspect of private property in human affection, introduces a secret principle of self-doubt." (Burke, 1951: 182). Men are in constant peril of losing control of their wives, because unlike other forms of "property," women can talk and act. A wife had to be safely guarded in order to safeguard the belongings of her spouse (of which she is but one). The socially and theologically sanctioned state of matrimony is all that assures a man that his property will be passed on along with his name (if he has sons). This same institution guarantees the impoverished state of unwed mothers and their "bastards," as we saw in Baldus's case. It is only if a father acknowledges a bastard as his own that he takes on the financial responsibility of rearing the child. Because men controlled all aspects of the economy, from guild-membership to inheritance practices to the laws governing these institutions, they could ensure that mothers and out-of-wedlock children would remain stigmatized. The only time illegitimacy threatened a man was within the conjugal bond itself, when a wife tried to pass off another man's child as his. The anxiety which men suffered from the fact that they could never be completely certain about the paternity of the children their wives bore is to be found in nearly all literary genres, in conduct books, chronicles, histories and medical treatises.

The husband's anxiety about his wife's fidelity was due to a property battle. The typical ownership scenario was complicated by the woman's "will"—a problem potential in "animate" property. A wife who had sexual relations with a man who was not her husband was effectively cheating him out of her value, while the "other man" was like a thief.

The woman's worth diminished with each use, or, more accurately, with each user. A different type of historical example which illuminates the husband's control of his wife's body is that of wet-nursing: the husband hired out his wife's services and *he* was paid for the milk and labor she provided for other men's children. The husband who hired the wet-nurse often did so in order to free his wife to bear more children, as breast-feeding is usually accompanied by a temporary suspension of menstruation and the suppression of ovulation (Klapisch-Zuber, 1985; Harrell, 1981).

Baldus, too is betrayed by his wife in the end: while journeying through the earth's nether regions he comes across his own twin sons. They have been abandoned by their mother, who decided to live with another man. Berta has illegally done what many widowed Renaissance women were forced to do: because their principal attachment to their husband's family is severed by his death, her own family often calls her back, dowry and all, in order to put her on the marriage market once more (Klapisch-Zuber, 1985). Any children usually remained in the husband's family, as they "belonged" there. The children just as often hoped that their mother would stay, if only for monetary reasons: restoring her dowry would deplete the patrimony they hoped to receive. Woman's lack of a fixed identity, then, made it difficult for her to please the two families who made claims upon her. Berta may have thought that she'd fallen victim to the same fate as Baldovina; once the spouse had left on his "pilgrimage" or adventure, she might never see him again. Such a consideration, though, was not a part of Folengo's world-view.

I began this study by observing that inter-gender relationships in *Baldus* were a source of tension, and I attempted to trace some of the strains back to their origins in Renaissance socio-cultural institutions. Paradoxically, women were viewed, *en masse*, as having no fixed identity; I say paradoxically because they were fixed in the minds of Renaissance men as being unstable, indeterminate. The fact that many male authors portrayed women as an almost undifferentiated collection of beings, united by their common biology, is consistent with the de-humanizing effects of any stereotype. Misogyny is the pernicious expression of this stereotyping. It is interesting to note, in studying these

considerations, that the very institutions men created for their benefit and assurance gave way to situations beyond their control; for there would be no cuckoldry if there were no marriage, no private property in human affections.

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